OLD!
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES
retro GAMER
INSIDE EXOLON
RAFFAELE CECCO GIVES THE LOW-DOWN ON HIS CLASSIC 8-BIT HIT
ALSO INSIDE
FOOD FIGHT | TOMMY TALLARICO
ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES | HALO
ADVENTURE SOFT | GAUNTLET
20 YEARS OF
THE KING OF FIGHTERS
WE CELEBRATE TWO DECADES OF SNK'S POPULAR BEAT-'EM-UP
Gotta catch 'em all!
COLLECTOR'S EDITIONS #1 OF 4
30 YEARS OF
DUCK HUNT
YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO NINTENDO'S CLASSIC LIGHTGUN GAME
POKÉMON
THE COMPLETE EVOLUTION
CREATORS REVEAL THE FULL STORY BEHIND THE POPULAR SERIES
FEATURED IN THIS GREAT ISSUE:
TURBO GRAFX 16
DISCOVER WHY NEC'S PC ENGINE HAS BEEN WOWING GAMERS FOR 25 YEARS
WILD GUNS
IS NATSUME'S WEIRD BLASTER FULL OF CLASSIC MOMENTS?
HALF-LIFE 2
WILL YOU STILL BE PLAYING VALVE'S SEQUEL IN YEARS TO COME?
ip IMAGINE PUBLISHING
DigitalEdition
GreatDigitalMags.com
ISSUE 135

THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE POKÉMON



DARRAN JONES

Everyone is going to plump for Pikachu so I'm going for Snorlax who is big and cuddly. Just like me!

Expertise:
Juggling a beautiful wife, two gorgeous girls and an award-winning magazine

Currently playing:
Castlevania: Bloodlines

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



NICK THORPE

I could never bear to evolve my Squirtle – he was such a happy-looking thing…

Expertise:
Owning seven Master Systems

Currently playing:
Danganronpa: Trigger Happy Havoc

Favourite game of all time:
Sonic The Hedgehog



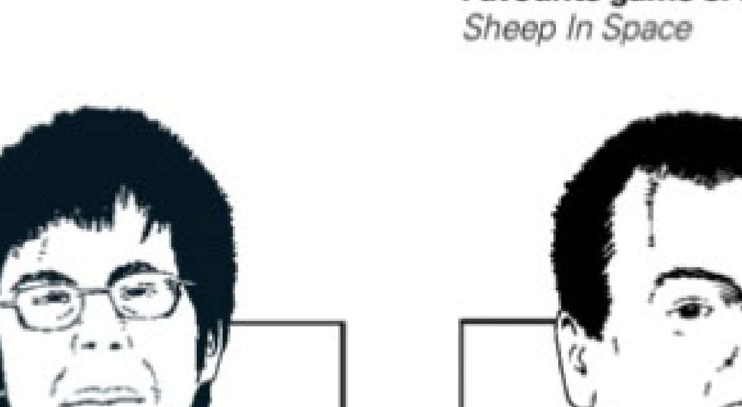
PAUL DRURY

It has to be my faithful Bulbasaur, who I watched grow from a little acorn into a mighty Venusaur during my 101 hours playing through *Pokémon Red*. My Pokédex was full but he'll always be my number one.

Expertise:
Fabulous Food Flinging

Currently playing:
Murasaki Baby

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space





JONATHAN WELLS

I was always a fan of Gyarados, despite the painful process to get him! Hand me my old rod!

Expertise:
Tackling dirty nappies and retro spreads

Currently playing:
Middle Earth: Shadow of Mordor

Favourite game of all time:
Day of the Tentacle



DAVID CROOKES

Charizard but only because the dragon is the only one I can remember, being honest.

Expertise:
Amstrad, Lynx, adventures, *Dizzy* and PlayStation (but is that retro? Debate!)

Currently playing:
Asphalt Overdrive

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword



CRAIG GRANNELL

Having never actually played a Pokémon game (yes, I'm the one), I'm going to go with 'Barry' and hope no-one notices.

Expertise:
Games that don't require 37 fingers to play

Currently playing:
The Nightmare Cooperative

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



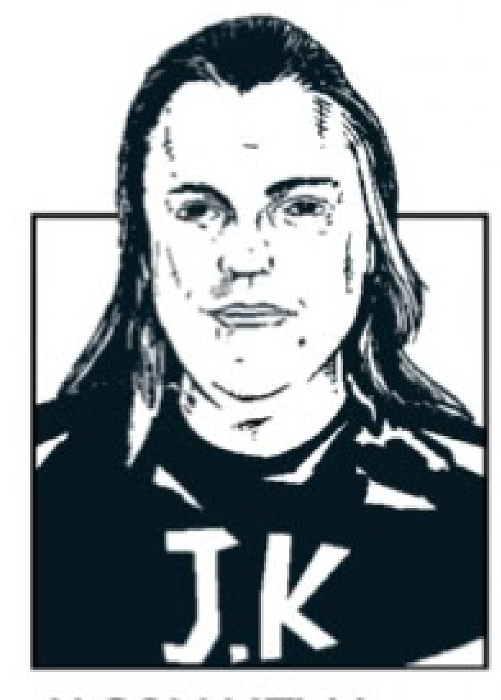
PAUL DAVIES

It's Pikachu, sorry. I love him to bits.

Expertise:
Repeatedly banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
GTA V

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N' Ghosts



JASON KELK

I don't think I know more than three Pokémon… but Jigglypuff just for cuteness.

Expertise:
Indie, homebrew and bedroom-coded games.

Currently playing:
GWNN

Favourite game of all time:
Io





That's it. I've fallen off the wagon yet again. Maybe it was last month's superb feature on collecting, or perhaps it's my compulsive personality – regardless, I'm collecting games again and it feels good.

I've plumped for Sega's Mega Drive, mainly due to its fun arcade conversions and the large number of shoot-'em-ups available for the console. While I'm a big fan of the Super Nintendo, I feel I've got on the roundabout too late and am loath to pay the silly prices many games I owned now cost.

This collecting vibe can also be found in our latest issue, as you'll notice that there are four amazing covers to collect, all based on one of the biggest gaming franchises of all time. While three of the covers are out in the wild, you'll only get our awesome Pikachu cover if you're a current subscriber. Needless to say we'll be doing similar things in the future, so be sure to take out a subscription.

In the meantime, enjoy our fantastic Pokémon feature that has exclusive content from the creators and will hopefully remind you of when catching all of Nintendo's creations became yet another gaming obsession. Oh and we've also hidden a sprite of Mew in the issue. See if you can find him.

Enjoy the magazine,







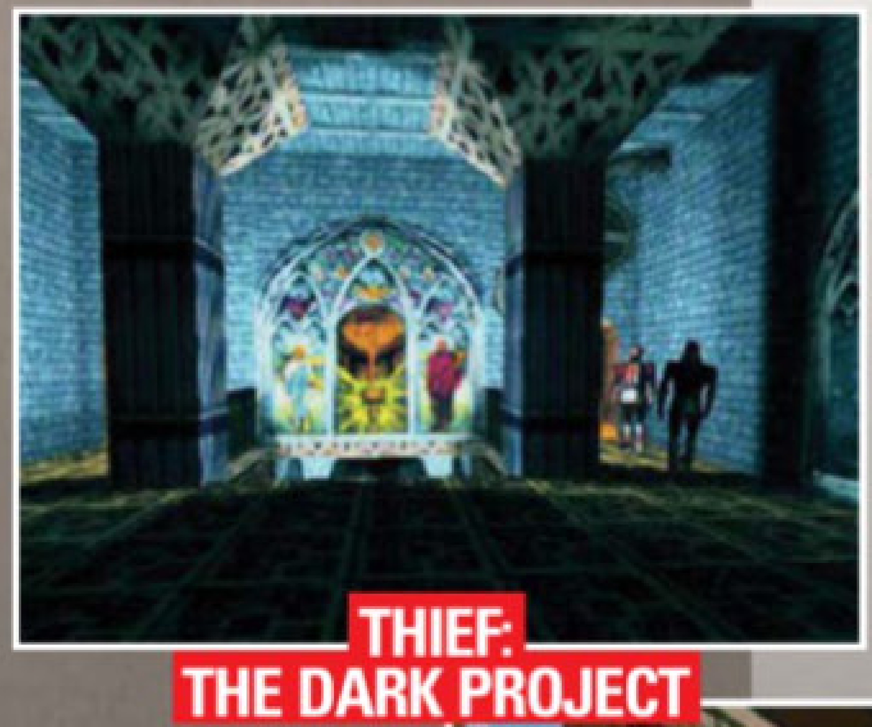
Is Ken Levine gaming's greatest icon?

With the new generation now in full swing, we felt it was the perfect time to celebrate some of gaming's biggest icons for an exciting upcoming feature.

Help **Retro Gamer** find the many important individuals who have turned our favourite pastime into one of the world's biggest forms of entertainment, so that we can give them the recognition they deserve in a future issue. Whether you believe it was Shigeru Miyamoto who refreshed the gaming landscape, or that Nolan Bushnell heralded the start of the industry as we know it, we'd love to have your input. As always, the best suggestions will appear in the magazine, so take this opportunity to join in the celebrations and have your say.

You can tell us about your favourite industry veterans on the **Retro Gamer** forum, our Facebook page, or even via Twitter using **#videogameicons**.

We look forward to your suggestions…


THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT


SYSTEM SHOCK 2



FREEDOM FORCE


TRIBES: VENGEANCE


BIOSHOCK

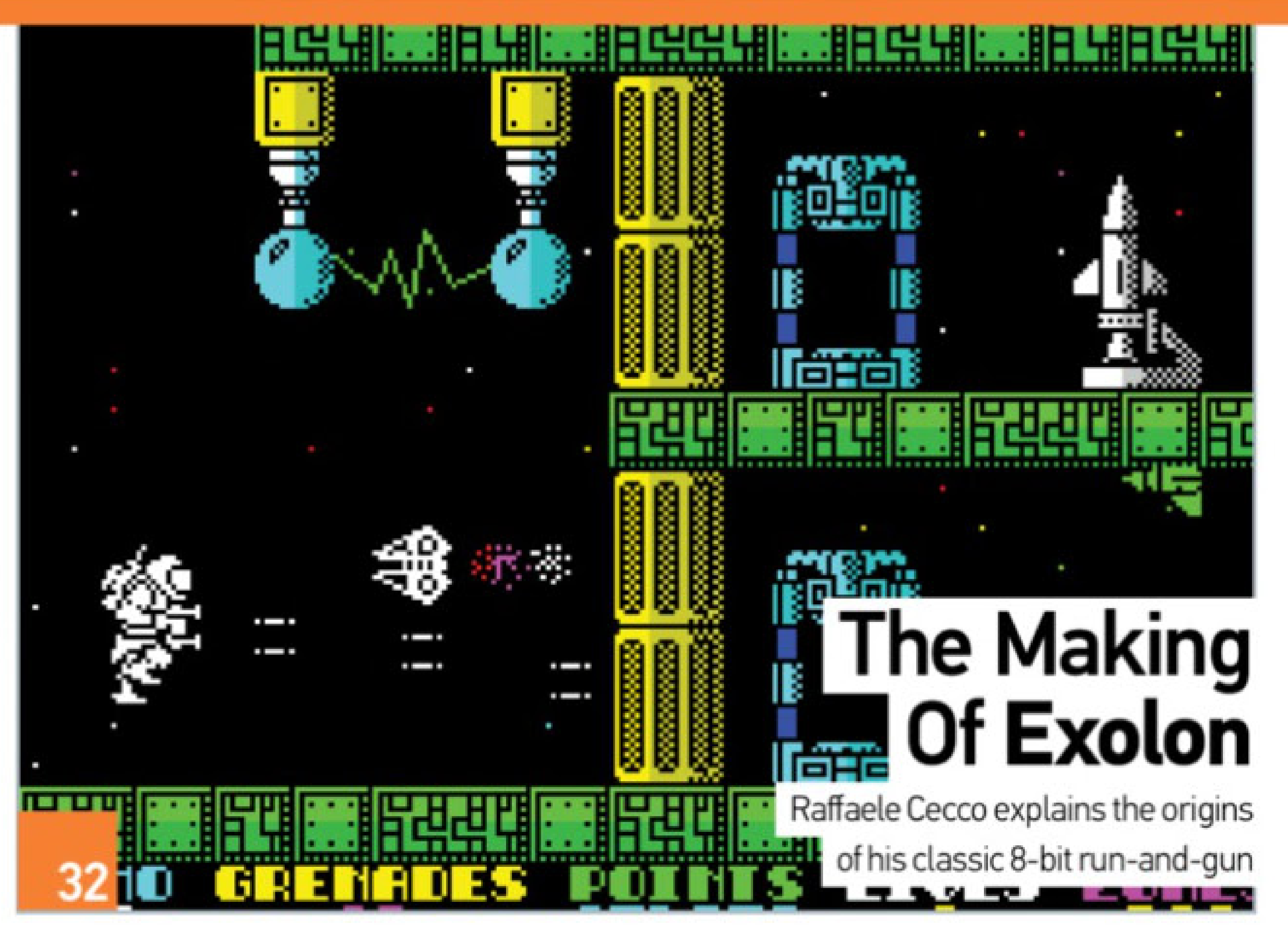


"If I didn't fail as a screenwriter when I started out, I would probably not be in games. I would probably be writing a TV show I wasn't excited about."

Ken Levine

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>> Load 135 Breathing new life into classic games



Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

 RetroGamerUK  @RetroGamer_Mag  retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

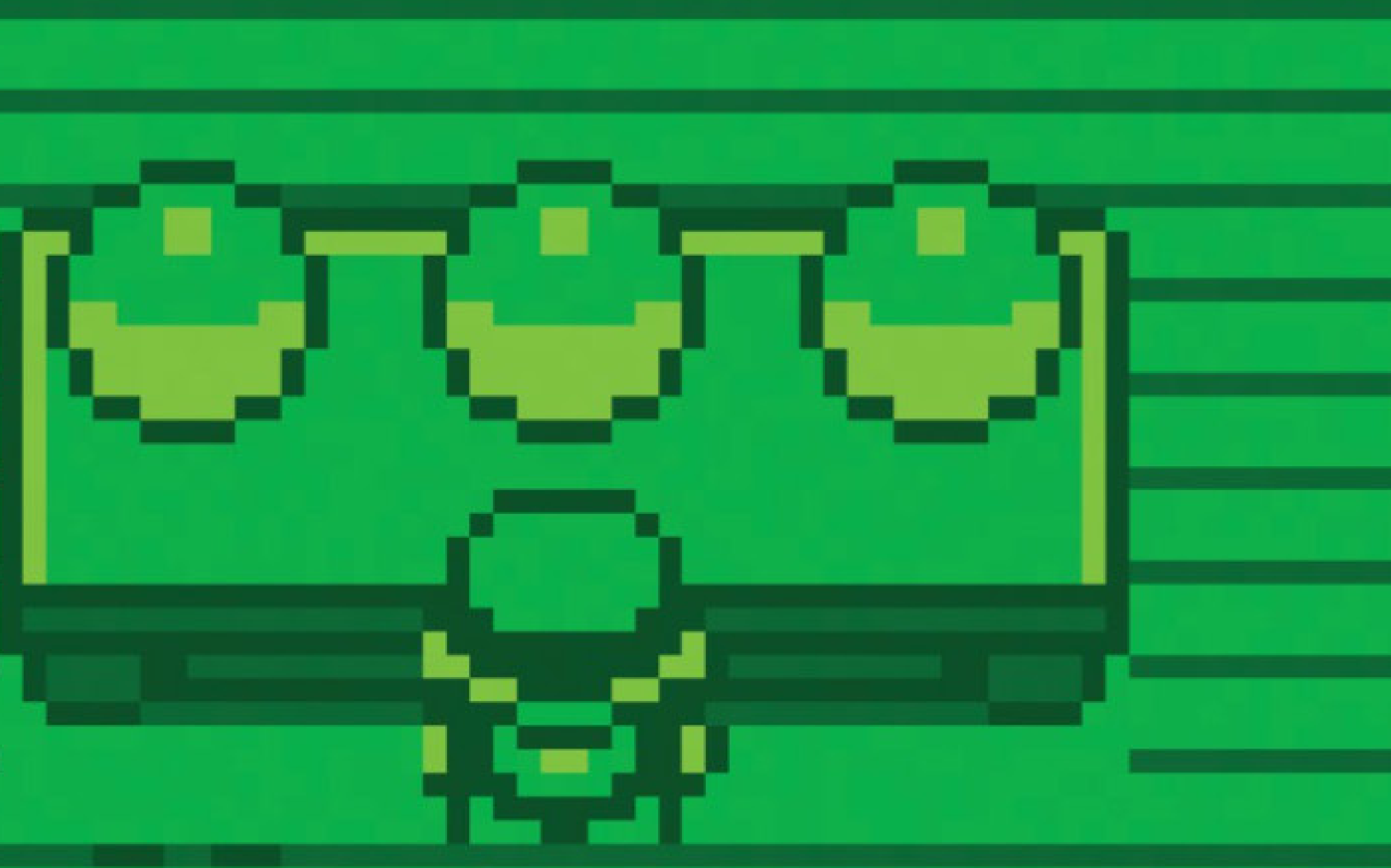




"Everyone wanted to shoot [the hunting dog] because it mocked players"

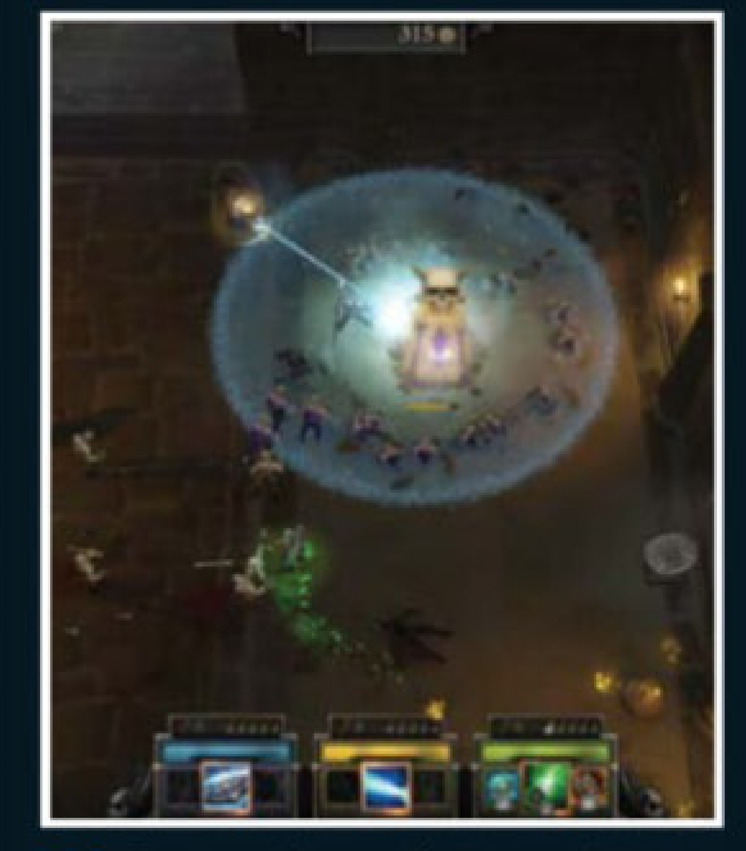
Jerry Momoda lines up his sights on Duck Hunt's pesky pooch







REVIEWS



ESSENTIALS



THE RETURN OF CINEMAWARE

» [Amiga] Everything about the quality of Cinemaware can pretty much be summed up in this classic image.

SVEN VOESSING AND LARS BATISTA ON REVISITING CLASSICS AND REBUILDING WINGS



CONTENTS

It's an exciting time for Cinemaware. As well as planning a brand new compilation featuring many of its classic games, it's recently unleashed its Kickstarter-funded update of *Wings: Remastered Edition*. We caught up with associate producer Sven Voessing and executive producer Lars Batista to discover how the two projects came to be.

How did you go about choosing the included games?
Sven Voessing: We essentially focused on the original titles launched by the first iteration of Cinemaware. These games were released between 1986-1991 and all of them will be included, both in Amiga and PC-DOS formats. This even includes titles that had a limited release such as *TV Sports: Boxing* and the expansion pack for *It Came From The Desert*: *Antheads*! Yes, *all* of them will be included!

Why include both Amiga and DOS ports?
SV: We got a lot of fans who either played the original Amiga versions and were part of the original Cinemaware generation, or fans who maybe bought the PC ports that came out later (who never had an Amiga) and who missed out on the superior quality of the Amiga originals. This will be the first time both versions will be offered together in the same package, and it is a cool way to compare how different both platforms really were at the time. In addition, several of the games had features not seen in one platform or the other, so it is fun to explore both really!

Have there been any enhancements over the original games?
LB: You get the original games running under emulation. Nothing was done to alter them in any way, as this was not the intent. It is a lot more convenient to run them now – just click and play – so anyone can enjoy these classics once again. Manuals and game box covers will also be included in PDF format and we might include a few surprises if possible!

How does it feel to know that *Wings: Remastered Edition* is so close to release?
SV: It is really an awesome feeling!



» Lars feels that gamers will be happy having access to the Amiga and PC ports of past classics.



» Sven is excited about the incoming release of *Wings*. Here's hoping more remasters follow.

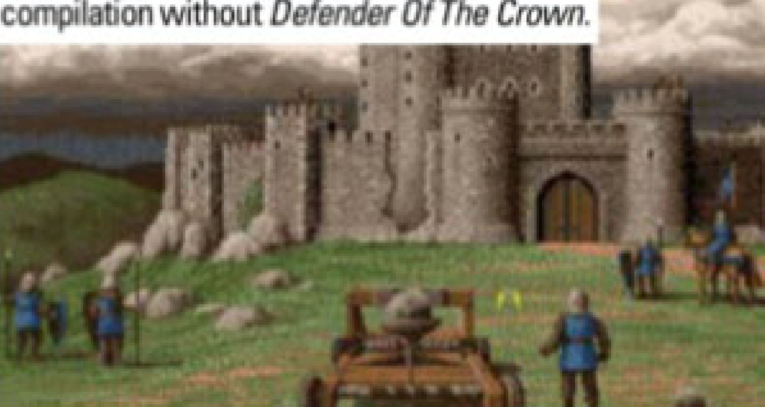

» [PC] Visually, *Wings: Remastered Edition* is a huge improvement over the original.

The team has worked really hard in the last nine months during development of this game and now it is so close to coming out – it's quite unbelievable how far we've come with the support of our community.

LB: During this time, we've made many new friends in the business, grown our community, and so many fans are excited that we're bringing back this awesome game with their direct input as a critical aspect of development. However, we also had a loss with Ken Melville, one of the original Cinemaware team members, who passed away earlier this year. Ken was a composer on the original *Wings* as well as the great writer behind *It Came From The Desert*. He was a very kind and great person who supported our cause a lot.

Why do you think there is so much love for Wings?

SV: *Wings* is a powerful game with a dramatic storyline. Storytelling was very rare in the Eighties/early Nineties and in *Wings* you are really central to the story. Many fans tell us that they never skip the story or journal entries because they are so engrossed in the game that they feel the emotions of their pilot.

» [Amiga] It wouldn't be a Cinemaware compilation without *Defender Of The Crown*.


What challenges have you faced?

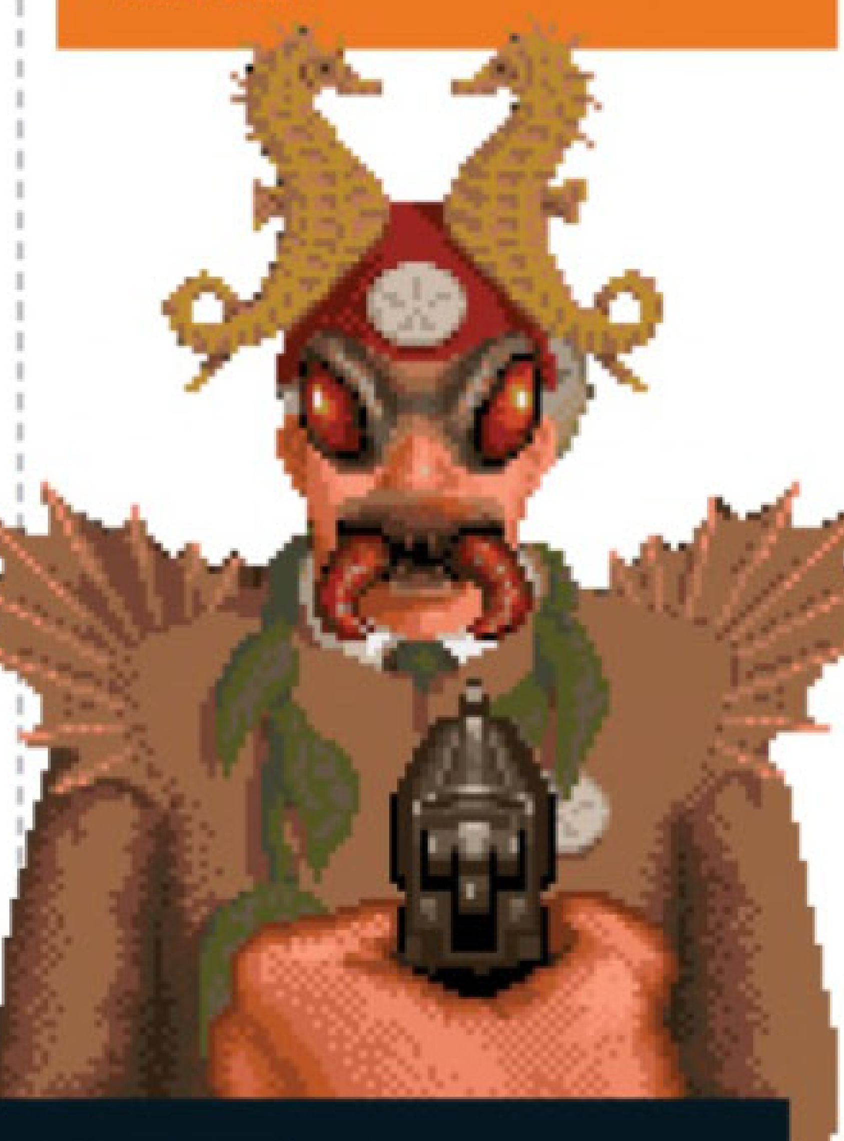
SV: Recreating that classic 'Cinemaware' feeling and standing up to the huge expectations of the fans, no doubt. Cinemaware was (and in our opinion still is!) a revolutionary influence in the way games were presented and played, and we want to bring back that feeling to not just our fans, but an entirely new generation of gamers as well. *Wings* in itself was also an entirely new type of game, that played the emotional and dramatic aspects of the story in such a way that they were as important (maybe more so) than the actual gameplay. At Cinemaware, we want to keep exploring more of this aspect in our future games.

CINEMAWARE ANTHOLOGY

» What's inside the classic collection

- DEFENDER OF THE CROWN
- SDI
- THE KING OF CHICAGO
- SINBAD AND THE THRONE OF THE FALCON
- LORDS OF THE RISING SUN*
- ROCKET RANGER (GERMAN EDITION)
- IT CAME FROM THE DESERT
- IT CAME FROM THE DESERT II: ANTHEADS*
- WINGS*
- TV SPORTS: FOOTBALL
- TV SPORTS: BASKETBALL
- TV SPORTS: BASEBALL
- TV SPORTS: BOXING
- THE THREE STOOGES*

* AMIGA ONLY




» [PC] *Wings: Remastered Edition* will be released shortly and already looks superb.

» [Amiga] Lesser-known games like *TV Sports: Basketball* will be available on the anthology.

What will the new version offer over the Amiga original?

SV: Besides the high-definition graphics and the awesome re-orchestrated soundtrack by Sound of Games, there is quite a bit more actually. We implemented a handful of new, secret missions, an alternate victory ending and funeral sequence, the choice to play the game with the original soundtrack and an alternate coloured plane. [Plus] several other smaller enhancements and, with the support of Kalypso, we got a great voice-over actor for the journal and mission commentaries.

Will any other Cinemaware games be given a similar treatment in the future?

LB: Most definitely! Fans have been frantically asking for new versions of *It Came From The Desert*, *Rocket Ranger* and others… We are planning our upcoming projects as we speak, so please check out our website (www.cinemaware.com) for the most recent news – it will be announced soon! In addition, next year Cinemaware will be announcing our first, brand-new IP in many years, an exciting project we cannot wait to start developing! *


» [PC] If *Wings: Remastered Edition* is a success, others may follow. *It Came From The Desert* needs to happen.

TOO MUCH CHOICE

» Not sure what to dive into first? Try these…



WINGS

■ While you wait for the remaster, why not revisit the Amiga original? The atmosphere is immense, thanks to great characterisation, dramatic aerial battles and a superb soundtrack. It's lengthy to boot, ensuring that you'll be getting plenty of value for money from an already loaded collection.



ROCKET RANGER

■ The news that this is going to be the German release will no doubt upset some purists, but there's now denying that *Rocket Ranger* remains a great adventure, regardless of whether it features Nazis or not. Here's hoping a patch could be added for proper authenticity, as it won't feel the same otherwise.



IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

■ For many this remains Cinemaware's finest hour. The Fifties atmosphere is nailed brilliantly, while the exciting ant encounters and small town tribulations perfectly capture the spirit of the dodgy sci-fi films that the game is so obviously based on.



ARMOR PIERCED

MARATHON GAMING WORLD RECORD HOLDER FALLS SHORT OF TOPPLING HIS BEST

John Salter, the world record holder for the longest single-credit session on an arcade game, fell narrowly short of beating his own record in a play session stretching over 80 hours in early October. John was attempting to play Cinematronics' 1980 arcade title *Armor Attack* for 100 hours in order to raise money for Lorain County Boys & Girls Clubs, which offers a gaming-focused educational programme for children aged 10-13, and streamed the attempt live online from the moment it began on 30 September.

While the 100-hour goal was a feat that John felt he could achieve when contacted by **Retro Gamer** for issue 131's Marathon Men feature, he ended up with a total play time of 81 hours and 27 minutes, falling short of the record he set in April which stands at 85 hours and 16 minutes. Problems became apparent as the clock approached 81 hours, with John losing lives and struggling to stay focused. He was heard on the stream saying, "Mentally I'm out, I'm having problems. When that helicopter comes on screen, and this is no lie, I'm seeing arms going through the enemies, like it's a person. When a helicopter explodes it's like a ballerina with the arms." This was apparently unlike anything experienced during his previous attempt, but John claimed that the hallucinations were more funny than distressing. The attempt was abandoned at the 81-hour mark, with John's remaining supply of over 100 lives carrying the extra minutes.

Despite falling short of his goal time and previous record, John's record attempt allowed Lorain County Boys & Girls Clubs to reach their fund-raising goal, and makes him the only man with two recorded single-credit arcade runs of over 80 hours. The other man to have a recorded run of over 80 hours is former world record holder George Leutz, who played Gottlieb's *Q*bert* in his session.



» [Arcade] The marathon gaming session raised money for Lorain County Boys & Girls Clubs in Ohio.





Turn to page 110 for our interview

DEVELOPERS GATHER FOR PREMIERE

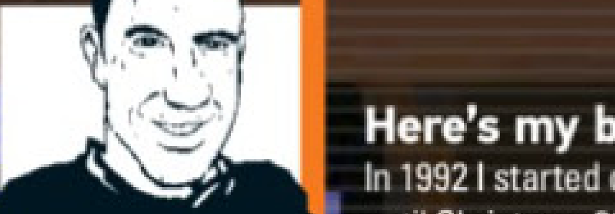
The long-awaited documentary film *From Bedrooms To Billions* had its premiere at EGX London on 25 September, attracting a large gathering of famous faces in a celebration of the British gaming industry. Developers such as Archer Maclean, Jeff Minter and the Oliver twins were joined by former journalists, musicians and more to see the film, which interviews personalities of the Eighties micro scene about how British games development grew from bedroom coding into today's multi-billion pound industry. The documentary is now available to buy on DVD, Blu-ray and as a digital download from www.frombedroomstobillions.com.

THE NEW 8-BIT HEROES FINDS FUNDING



A NES project of unusual scope titled The New 8-Bit Heroes has surpassed its $36,000 funding goal on Kickstarter. The project consists primarily of *Mystic Searches*, a brand new NES game delivered on cartridge. Intriguingly, the people behind the project claim that it will also come with a more modern game, housed in the cartridge and accessible via USB cable, and that the two will interact with one another. The project also promises a documentary film about the game's development process and tutorials for those seeking to make their own NES games. The team is aiming to complete the project by 18 October 2015.





Here's my bio... Paul Davies
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.

Paul really likes his games, don'tcha Paul?



Define Gamer

We started as defenders against the space invaders, chasers of ghosts, climbers of ladders and killers of gorillas. It was us versus them. They: the games against mankind. We: a united front. While friends and relatives watched *Emmerdale* and *Cheggers Plays Pop*, the first gamers were forged.

I am one of the first gamers. I am a gamer. It's a category that increasingly seems nonsensical in a world in which everyone 'games'. If I had the time, I'm sure I'd play everything going because games, that is computer and video games, are one of life's great passions for me. But in the same way that nobody really describes themselves as a music lover or movie buff, despite listening to whatever they fancy and regularly watching the latest flicks, being simply a 'gamer' is far too vague lately.

The classic gaming magazines such as *Zzap!64*, *C&VG* and *Games Master* (still going!) presume that a general interest in games warrants the investigation of all examples available. Similarly the now long-in-the-tooth websites – as old now as *C&VG* was in 1996 – aim to please all tastes. It's tech paranoia, really, similar to what keeps audiophiles living in fear of each new monthly publication. The console wars and PC supremacists are driven by the same thing.

But anyway, gamers can't just be gamers any longer or our beloved form of entertainment is going to stagnate and become so stinky that not even you or I will want to hang around for much longer.

In 1996, the year that my team and I relaunched *CVG* magazine, a guy called Richard Bartle – he of Multi-User Dungeon (MUD) fame – sought to scientifically examine the gaming archetype. The so-called Bartle Test of Gamer Psychology, based on his original thesis, was devised a few years later by Erwin Andreasen and Brandon Downey. It is revered with all seriousness by games design students of today, to help pitch ideas and identify audiences. Though its origins lie in Multi-User Dungeons, the world's first Massively Multiplayer Online games, it is relevant to all kinds of games in development today. It looks into four archetypes: Killers, Achievers, Socialisers and Explorers. Next it applies tendencies that favour exploring the world or interacting with other players, and choosing interaction or unilateral action. I had to look up the meaning for the latter, which basically refers to a player's tendency to think socially or selfishly in a situation.

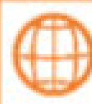
The reason I'm bringing this to your attention is because at some point gaming is likely to become a popular dinner conversation to be had with people you need to impress. So, when somebody rather apologetically says, eg "Paul really likes his games, don'tcha Paul?" causing you to look for a hole in which to vanish, you can instead defiantly say, "Why yes! I'm what you might call a Killer/Achiever with unilateral tendencies", or, "Sure, I'm quite the explorer and love to socialise while interacting."

This would be the thinking person's response, as opposed to "Yeh, I play shooters to alleviate stress or adventures when I just want to escape," or even reaching deep for "Heh, I love the retro stuff the most because who doesn't like the smell of plastic?" Both of which just make you sound scary.

Thank goodness for science, eh. *

What do you think?

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

 RetroGamerUK  @RetroGamer_Mag  retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk  www.retrogamer.net/forum

Commodore 64: A Visual Commpendium



PICK OF THE MONTH

Having achieved Kickstarter funding earlier this year, this eagerly anticipated book really hits the spot for C64 fans. The majority of the book contains screenshots of games, accompanied by mini-reviews or quotes from developers and journalists of the time, arranged in chronological order to give a real sense of how the machine developed over its lifetime. The book doesn't just celebrate the in-game art, though, as it also contains a healthy selection of loading screens, hardware photography and even Oliver Frey's iconic *Zzap!64* covers. It's a comprehensive celebration of C64 culture, from 1982 to the present day.

Price: £24.99 **From:** funstock.co.uk

> **"A comprehensive celebration of C64 culture"**



Silph T-shirt

If you're the sort of person whose beloved Blaziken has migrated from Game Boy Advance to 3DS over the last decade, you've probably given a truckload of virtual cash to Silph Company, the dominant manufacturer of Pokémon technology. Here's a shirt that will let you subtly show your appreciation for the Poké Ball manufacturers to other knowing fans.

Price: £15.99
From: www.8ball.co.uk

Link Plush

The elf-like hero of the *Legend of Zelda* series is an iconic character, but one who tends to be more commonly represented in figurine form than plush. However, his cel-shaded appearance from the GameCube classic *The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker* is so cute and cartoonish that making a soft toy was clearly the right way to go.

Price: £19.99
From: www.gamerabilia.co.uk

Atari Wallet

Picture the scene: you're loading up your wallet to head to a retro gaming event, only to find that – horror of horrors – your wallet falls to pieces. It happens to us all the time, honest. But that's okay because it means we can buy items like this Atari wallet, which combines an attractive modern design with the appeal of an iconic retro brand.

Price: £13.55
From: www.funstock.co.uk

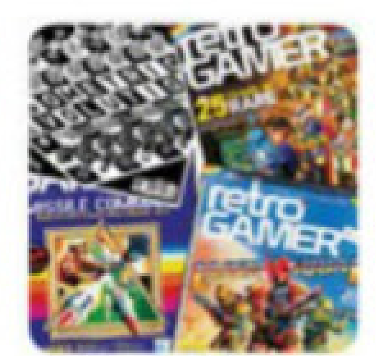


Retro Gamer Coasters

Avoid annoying drink rings on your furniture and get a blast of nostalgia at the same time with our awesome coasters. Available in packs of four, these tough durable coasters feature some of the best **Retro Gamer** covers we've ever produced, making them perfect for your loved ones.

Price: £4.99 **From: www.imagineshop.co.uk**



UFS Darkstalkers Tins

If you're a fan of trading card games and fighting games, UFS – the Universal Fighting System – could very well be your thing. The new Lilith and Morrigan collector's tins each contain a starter deck, three booster packs, three promotional cards and a rule book, all of which are compatible with past sets themed around games such as *Street Fighter* and *Tekken*.

Price: £25.00 (each)
From: www.zone-out.co.uk



LETTER FROM TED DABNEY

"This is a handwritten letter from Ted Dabney, one of the founders of Atari. While Nolan Bushnell was always in the spotlight, Ted was quiet and bowed out of Atari before it exploded. No journalists had spoken to him for decades until my writing partner, Leonard Hermann. Lenny made introductions and I followed it up with an interview in 2011."

PAID: N/A

COSMIC AVENGER – COLECOVISION

"*Cosmic Avenger* was the first game that I ever owned and the best gift my parents ever gave me other than their love. This is the original copy I was given all those years ago and was the game that started it all for me!"

PAID: N/A

COUGAR BOY

"It's a rare system from Brazil and I have 15 cartridges for it. The unit and the games were sealed when I got it and I can't bear to open them, so I have no idea what they are like!"

PAID: Michael traded around $300 worth of games for it

EPYX 500XJ CONTROLLER

"It may seem like just another controller, but it is my favourite of all time. This controller takes a beating and with the microswitches inside, it may be noisy but it never breaks. I primarily used it for the VCS and Colecovision, but only for single-button games of course!"

PAID: $9.99 from Montgomery Ward Dept Store in 1984



NFL FOOTBALL LA RAIDERS VS SD CHARGERS – HALCYON

"The Halcyon was a system designed by Rick 'Dragon's Lair' Dyer. His company went belly up and the game was never released, but a few have made it into the hands of collectors."

PAID: $30

JEWEL IN THE CROWN

THAT PIECE YOU CAN'T BE WITHOUT

A HANDMADE BROWN BOX AUTOGRAPHED BY RALPH BAER

■ "I have been fortunate to work on several projects with Ralph and he presented me with a handmade and autographed fully functional replica of the original Brown Box. It makes regular appearances at trade shows, museums and classrooms. It was a true honour to be awarded such a compliment by one of my heroes."

AMOUNT PAID: N/A

Collectors corner

Readers take us through the retro keyhole

BIO

NAME: Michael Thomasson

ESTIMATED VALUE: $750,000

MOST EVER SPENT: $100 – Intellivision Demonstration Cartridge

FAVOURITE CONSOLE: Colecovision

FAVOURITE GAME: Tied between RE4 and Alan Wake

Super-Collector is not a term Retro Gamer would use casually, but even we admit Michael Thomasson, of Buffalo, NY, would surely qualify for this impressive epithet. Just look at these numbers: approximate size of collection, 11,500 items. 113 different platforms collected for. 21 complete set collections; 14 near-complete. Unsurprisingly, this was enough to earn Michael the accolade of having the largest videogame collection ever when it was evaluated by the Guinness Book Of Records earlier this year. But how did it all start?

"In 1978 I was riding my bicycle with my brother to the local Dairy Queen for a refreshing Mr Misty," says Michael, "and instead saw a huge hulking box in the middle of the restaurant." The box was none other than a *Space Invaders* arcade machine and soon all the young man's quarters, that had been destined for the iced drink, were inside the game instead. "The rest is history," he smiles. Michael's first owned title was *Cosmic Avenger* for the Colecovision, although receiving it as a present on Christmas Eve proved to be a bittersweet moment. "I thought for sure that I'd be getting an actual Colecovision the following day, but it was the hot Christmas item and was sold out everywhere. I looked at the box and read the manual of the game every day until I finally got the console."

Incredibly, despite collecting since 1983, Michael has sold two collections in the past and is now trying to sell his current one too. "In 1989 I wanted to raise money to buy a Sega Genesis," he says, "and then in 1997 I sold off complete sets of Sega Master System, Neo-Geo and TurboGrafx-16 to pay for an engagement ring for my girlfriend, JoAnn." Which brings us to his current collection and its well-publicised sale back in June. "Despite screening by GameGavel, a bogus bidder got through and failed to pay," says Michael of the $750,000 auction, a fact made sadder by Michael's reason for selling. "My mother's medical care, after insurance, is over $700 a day. Since my father passed away, my brother and I have been caring for her and by trying to get ahead of the situation, selling my only good asset, my collection, is the best solution." Michael's collection is at www.gooddealgames.com and if you've got a few spare quid it could be yours!

Our thanks to Michael for his time.

a moment with…

» [Atari ST] Ned's graphics work on *Rod Land* captures the colourful, appealing look of the arcade game.

» [iOS] *Spaceman Dave* combines ideas from numerous arcade games to create a very playable blaster.

» [PC] As well as *Spaceman Dave*, Ned has games for kids available online at fungooms.com

Ned Langman

We chat to the veteran artist about his iOS project Spaceman Dave

Where did the idea for *Spaceman Dave* originate?
I love *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *Red Dwarf*, both of which feature spacemen called Dave, so I just have it in my subconscious mind that Dave is a normal name for a spaceman. The beard comes from Brian Blessed's character in *Flash Gordon*. Dive!

How important are controls in iOS and Android games?
The challenge these days seems to be to make games that use as little finger input as possible, just one tap if possible. So I tried to do that with *Spaceman Dave*, which was hard considering it was originally meant to be a *Defender* clone – *Defender* controls just ain't going to work on a tablet or phone. I'm always going to prefer chunky analogue arcade controls to flat screens. I miss that physical feedback.

Why are games like *Spaceman Dave* well suited to these devices?
Because they're cheap? Haha, I don't know. I like these games that are instantly accessible that I can pick up and play for a few minutes before moving on to the next one. Not dissimilar to the old arcade days where your ten pence would last for about a minute in each machine, unless you were actually good at playing them. Which I wasn't.

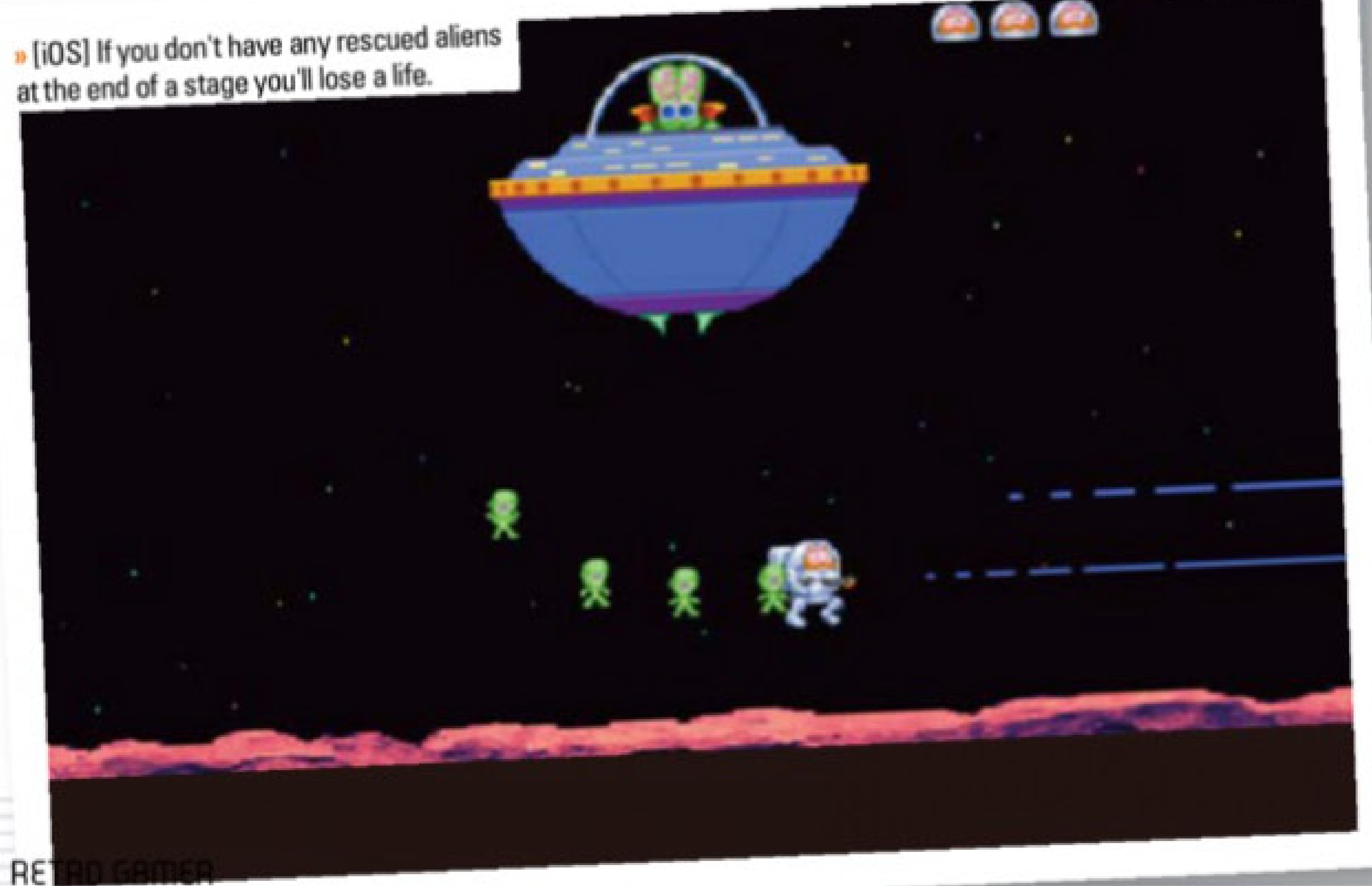
What similar iOS games do you wish you'd made?
Any of the Llamasoft games. And *Geometry Wars*, I was a big fan of that. Most recently though, I've been playing *Soccer Physics* with my kids, which has everyone falling about in hysterics. That's the kind of game I want to make!

You've made a few shoot-'em-ups. What do you like about them?
Oh, it's just switching your brain off I guess. Is it just a primal thing to move about and spray bullets all over the place? I'm not into violent or ultra-realistic gun games, but there's something about flying a spaceship around dispensing glowing bullets into waves of aliens. Is it a man thing? Or maybe I just like tidying up?

Would you transfer any of your classic games to iOS?
I desperately want to bring *SWIV* to iOS, but it's too big a job for me on my own. I definitely think there could be fun to be had with teaming up in multiplayer with other jeeps and helicopters, blowing stuff up. And there was always a little bit of satire and anarchic humour in *SWIV* and games of that era, which I'd like to see more of on iOS.

How does working on iOS games compare to the games you created during the 8/16-bit days?
Oh, very similar in some respects. It's great to be able to make original stuff in your bedroom and put it out there. But not as easy to make money doing it! The technology is so good now, the pictures so crystal clear and the performance so fast and smooth, but I love the idea of subverting that by making blocky retro-styled games. It's not to be taken lightly when you consider that the two hottest titles with kids are *Minecraft* and *Terraria*, both of which look like they were made 20-odd years ago.

How has the industry changed since you started in it?
This is the bit where I feel old! I have such a nostalgic love of the industry at the beginning. The age of mavericks! It was such an exciting time, and there was so much creative freedom. It was great to get excited by a 3D shaded ball. You could release games without the use of focus groups or market data. And get paid! Nowadays there's more creativity than ever, but I guess because everyone can do it now, it all just gets lost in the white noise. Now, where's my Vectrex? *



» [iOS] If you don't have any rescued aliens at the end of a stage you'll lose a life.



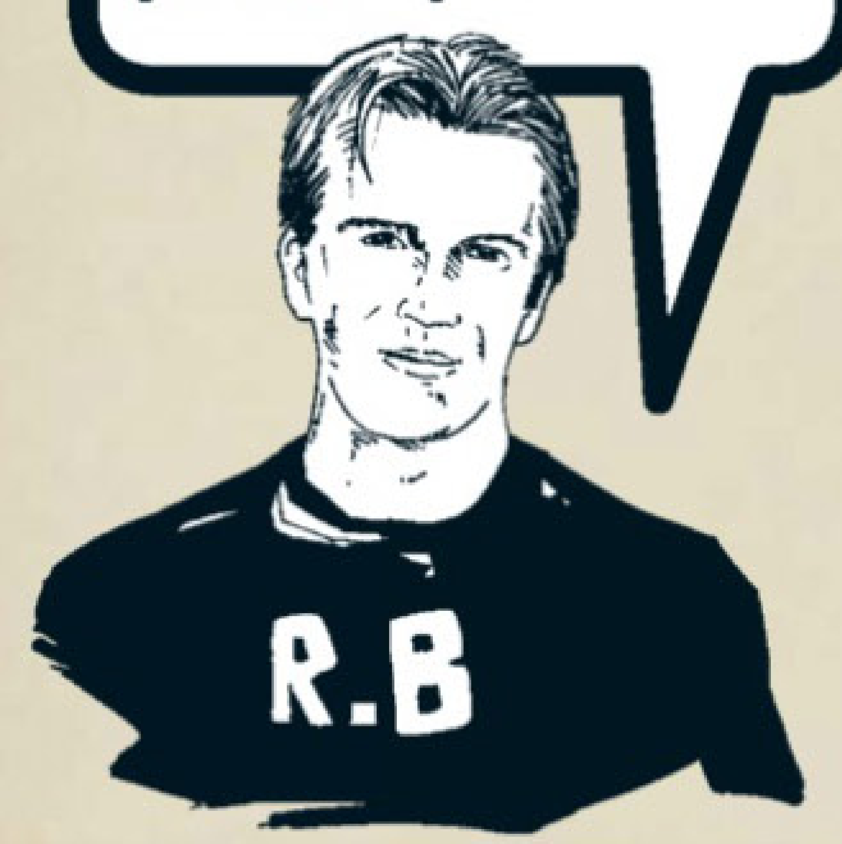
» [Amiga] The prospect of *SWIV* heading to iOS is a tantalising one – don't tease us, Ned!

BACK TO THE NINETIES

» [PC] *Grand Theft Auto* arrives and open-world gaming is taken up a notch.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1997

OCTOBER 1997 – GTA arrives, history is rewritten by Age Of Empires, Riven blows Myst away, Extreme-G flashes by, Resident Evil scares your pants off while Space Invaders and Arkanoid rise again. Richard Burton gets a sticky bat power-up…



In a sad turn of events, the highly regarded videogame designer Gunpei Yokoi died on 4 October after being hit by a car while inspecting damage to his own vehicle after a road traffic accident seconds earlier. Yokoi had worked for Nintendo since 1965 and was responsible for some major shifts in videogaming, including the Game & Watch LCD handheld games and Game Boy portable console. He also masterminded the now familiar directional pad design for console controllers. He was aged 56.

Newly released across Europe on PC was the first game in what would become a global videogaming franchise behemoth. *Grand Theft Auto* was originally developed by DMA Design (which later became Rockstar North) and published by BMG Interactive. This open-world action adventure game was set across three sprawling crime-ridden cities – Liberty City, San Andreas and Vice City – in which you could accrue points by completing tasks. While this sounded very unoriginal, the open world element gave you complete freedom, elevating *Grand Theft Auto* above the norm. Graphically it was lacking in detail but the gameplay content, backed up with a terrific soundtrack, more than made up for this minor niggle. It sold very well and a sequel was ordered.

Another huge franchise making its first tentative baby steps in the big wide world of videogaming was *Age Of Empires*, developed by Ensemble Studios and published by Microsoft. Released this month on PC and Mac, the real-time strategy game would introduce a world of history-based warring. *Age Of Empires* could be played solo or as a multiplayer game with up to eight people. It did tend to suffer from lag badly during network play. After choosing your civilisation from a choice of 12 – ranging from Egyptian, Hittites and Minoans – you set out on a campaign to defeat your enemy. Managing people was also key, as was the building of houses and farms and finding resources such as wood and food. *Age Of Empires* really caught the imagination of gamers tired

THIS MONTH IN…

OFFICIAL SEGA SATURN MAGAZINE

OSSM featured a picture-heavy news piece about a bizarre competition ran by the *Daily Star* newspaper and Sega. Readers could win cash and Sega prizes while *Daily Star* page 3 girls dressed as videogame characters such as Candy (Fighting Vipers) and Lisa (Last Bronx) in a saucy cosplay style.

AMIGA COMPUTING

After 117 issues spanning nine years, *Amiga Computing* finally shuffled off this mortal coil, heading off into the bright light of magazine heaven (see cover). Published by Europress, it was predominantly a serious magazine with a smattering of games coverage but was a firm favourite of the Amiga community, so it was sad to see it go.

NINTENDO POWER

Nintendo Power looked at the burgeoning craze of Tamagotchi that had swept across the world. Resulting weirdness included Tamagotchi day care for kids and workers who couldn't look after their pet during the day. They also looked at the forthcoming Game Boy version which, thankfully, had a save game option.




» [Sega Saturn] Head shots, zombie frights, sudden scares, undergarments filled to the brim – it can only be *Resident Evil*.

of the same old space-themed games. Historical real-time strategy had come of age.

If puzzle adventuring was more your cup of tea, then the long awaited sequel to *Myst* would probably scratch that particular gaming itch. *Riven* by Cyan Worlds on PC continued the storyline where the original had left off. You once again played the Stranger who was helping his friend Atrus to locate his wife being held hostage. Therein the puzzlement commenced with harder, more testing problems to solve on a beautifully designed and constructed planet liberally strewn with steampunk-styled mechanical devices – many of which were central to puzzles, with some being criticised for overcomplexity. While the graphical content could not be faulted, the similarity to *Myst* led to many reviewers and gamers feeling short-changed. However, if what you wanted was more *Myst* but bigger, bolder, prettier and more testing then you would be a very happy camper.

Having been released on the PlayStation for over a year, the pant-filling survival-horror game *Resident Evil* finally found its way onto PC and Sega Saturn. You played a character in a law enforcement agency sent to a house – infested with mutated beings and all manner of zombified undead madness – in order to locate another team who were sent in on an earlier mission. The aim of the game was to get out of the house alive while trying to find out why freaky stuff was happening there. That meant puzzle solving but also plenty of exercise for your trigger finger. *Resident Evil* was suitably scary with genuine shout out moments (zombie dog anyone?), helped in no small part by the atmospheric pre-rendered backdrops playing host to some well-defined 3D polygon-based characters and monsters. The original PlayStation game rated very well and the Saturn and PC ports were also highly regarded. So started another successful longstanding videogaming series.


» [Nintendo 64] Racing doesn't get much faster than *Extreme-G* on the N64. Plasma bike at the ready…

New out on the Nintendo 64 was a racing game in a similar mould to *F-Zero*, meaning it was bright, garish and ridiculously fast. *Extreme-G* saw you mount plasma-powered Akira-esque motorbikes which were tooled up with all manner of weaponry. The tracks were slickly designed, including loop-the-loops and humongous banked corners. Combined with the insane speed at which they travelled, it felt more like a rollercoaster ride rather than a chug up the bypass on your 125. A range of difficulty settings was available, if it wasn't testing enough already, with three championships to conquer. Once won, a range of other race options opened up, including Battle Arena and a collect-the-most-flags game. *Extreme-G* was more than a match for the likes of *F-Zero* and *Wipeout*.

Two surprising games were due to make an appearance on the Super Nintendo: the Taito retro classics of *Space Invaders* and *Arkanoid*. *Space Invaders* wasn't even an enhanced version, being the standard coin-op game with minimal tweaks. The graphics and backgrounds were ported directly from 1978 with extra options on choices of colour or monochrome graphics. A split-screen two-player competitive mode added some excitement to the proceedings, but essentially this was *Space Invaders* in its original form on a modern console. However, there was a smidge of originality with *Arkanoid: Doh It Again*, the fourth game in the *Arkanoid* series. It had 99 new levels with a big boss to fight every ten levels, nice crisp graphics and a save game feature when you got stuck midway. Two-player options included co-operative and competitive modes, which added a spot of longevity to what was otherwise more of the same *Arkanoid* bat-and-ball-based fun. Not that that's a bad thing of course… *


» [PC] Time to put away your laser blaster and engage in a spot of olde worlde warfare. Load up the catapult, lads…



» [PC] More puzzles, more frustration and more beautifully crafted graphics.

OCTOBER WORLD NEWS

October 6 saw the debut on US television of *Team Knight Rider*, a series based on the original *Knight Rider* show starring David Hasselhoff. This time a team of five crime fighters and their AI-blessed vehicles did battle against assorted nefarious evildoers. It lasted just one series spanning 22 episodes. Good job too – it was utter guff.

15 October saw the world land speed record broken by the ThrustSSC team in Black Rock Desert, Nevada. The vehicle was driven by Andy Brown, an RAF fighter pilot, and attained a speed of 763mph. It also became the first car to officially break the sound barrier.

24 October saw the passing of Don Messick, the American voice actor. While the name may not be familiar, his voice certainly would be with Messick having lent his vocal talents to many Hanna-Barbera cartoon characters, most notably Scooby Doo, Boo Boo from *Yogi Bear* and Muttley from *Wacky Races*.

31 October saw 19-year-old British au pair Louise Woodward convicted of murder for killing a baby she was caring for in Boston, USA. She was found guilty of shaking baby Eappen, causing a brain haemorrhage. It made worldwide news on both sides of the Atlantic. Woodward was jailed but later released after the conviction was reduced to manslaughter.

Notable album releases this month included *Unleash The Beast* (Saxon), *Nimrod* (Green Day), *Jugulator* (Judas Priest), *Around The Fur* (Deftones), *One More Megabyte* (The Toy Dolls) and *Exile* (Gary Numan).

CHARTS

OCTOBER 1997

PLAYSTATION

1 V-Rally (Ocean)
2 International Superstar Soccer Pro (Konami)
3 Worms: Platinum (Ocean)
4 Alien Trilogy: Platinum (Acclaim)
5 Rally Cross (Sony)

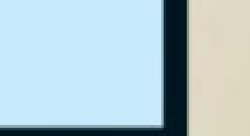
PC

1 Dungeon Keeper (EA)
2 Atomic Bomberman (Interplay)
3 X-Com: Apocalypse (MicroProse)
4 Command & Conquer: Red Alert (Virgin)
5 Championship Manager Double Pack (Eidos)



SEGA SATURN

1 Sonic Jam (Sega)
2 King Of The Fighters '95 (SNK)
3 Tomb Raider (Eidos)
4 Shining The Holy Ark (Sega)
5 Pandemonium! (Crystal Dynamics)



MUSIC

1 Candle In The Wind (Elton John)
2 Sunchyme (Dario G)
3 Barbie Girl (Aqua)
4 Spice Up Your Life (Spice Girls)
5 As Long As You Love Me (Backstreet Boys)



FREDDY LOS



Monkey Puncher

"TOMORROW I SHALL ALSO WORK HARD!"

#81

» TAITO » GAME BOY COLOR » 2000

When it comes to landmark Game Boy Color games, the word 'Nintendo' is all too prominent. Indeed, *Harvest Moon* and *Dragon Warrior* aside, it's something of a struggle to name quality third-party titles. That's unless you had the pleasure of playing Taito's *Monkey Puncher,* which not only had the greatest game name ever but also a hilariously botched translation that could rival the infamous *Zero Wing*.

The plot was as garbled as they come – mysterious gangsters known as the 'Saru Group' have been kidnapping monkey trainers with the use of mind control. After their father goes missing, Kenta and Sumire (the two playable characters) decide to raise a monkey fighter of their own in order to discover their dad's whereabouts.

Monkey Puncher is best described as a mixture of *Pokémon* and a generic virtual pet – your chosen chimp has to be kept happy and well fed, while playing the training mini-games will improve its strength and stamina. Every now and then an invite for a monkey punching match appears, which you can opt to accept or decline. The matches take place in boxing rings, but sadly the only interaction in this section is to hammer the A button to help your monkey back on its feet. When losing a match, the trainer will yell "You ass as you"

Firstly, your primate has to be tamed by giving it food and by calling its name via the menus. Once disciplined, the fun starts – you can send the critter on shopping errands and praise or rebuke its random purchases, send it on dates with other monkeys in hope of being able to breed a super monkey, or take it training. Training stages are pleasingly simple – pick a subject (sit-ups, punch-bag, jogging etc) and then press the A button with good timing to get a chain going.

Monkey Puncher was an incredibly simple game at heart, but also curiously addictive and as cute as a button. Copies are hard to come by as publisher Evolution Entertainment vanished off the scene as quickly as it arrived. *

MATT GANDER


THE EVOLUTION OF
POKÉMON™

EXPLOSIVELY POPULAR IN THE NINETIES, POKÉMON HAS OUTLIVED THE INITIAL FAD AND BECOME ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR SERIES OF GAMES. NICK THORPE TALKS TO THE DEVELOPERS ABOUT THE SERIES THAT CHALLENGES YOU TO "CATCH 'EM ALL"...

It's extremely hard not to be aware of *Pokémon* – if you haven't been tempted by the urge to catch 'em all, you probably know someone who has. The videogames have sold over 200 million units, with some titles topping the 10 million mark. It's far more than just a gaming phenomenon, though – since the series launched in the UK back in 1999, Pikachu's smiling face has appeared everywhere from trading cards to cinema screens. However, it may come as a surprise to many of you that the origins of the series go all the way back to 1990.

The *Pokémon* series has always been primarily developed by Game Freak, a Japanese team which grew out of a fanzine of the same name produced by writer Satoshi Tajiri and illustrator Ken Sugimori. "When we first started, some of the readers were actually programmers and they had the skills and access to the hardware – that's how we started in producing videogames," Ken explained in a **games™** interview on the history of the series. The firm made its debut in 1989 with *Quinty*, a Famicom puzzle game localised for the North American NES market as *Mendel Palace*. That same year, the Game Boy was released and Game Freak moved quickly to outline a vision of a new type of RPG, which would utilise the handheld's link cable and portable nature. A design document entitled 'Capsule Monsters' was ready by 1990.


» Junichi Masuda has overseen the whole series.

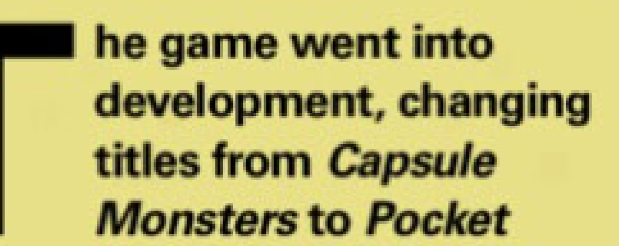

» Shigeru Ohmori has directed the 3DS remakes.

When you examine the *Pokémon* games on the most basic level, they are fairly typical Japanese RPGs with a few key twists. The first is that as a Pokémon trainer, instead of gathering party members through the storyline, you recruit the monsters you encounter in the wild. This element is present in the early design documents, though the original idea involved players having ▶



▶ a charisma stat, whereas in the final game they simply lower a wild Pokémon's health until it can't resist being captured in a Poké Ball. These monsters have special types, such as Fire and Water, which make some Pokémon more or less effective against others. The second major twist is that the games each contain a strong multiplayer element, atypical of RPGs, in which players can trade their creatures or engage in battles. Some Pokémon even require trading to evolve into their stronger upgraded forms. This was also a key part of the pitch document, forming the centrepiece of Satoshi Tajiri's vision for the game.

The final twist is that each game comes in at least two versions, with a select number of Pokémon absent from each. The brainchild of Shigeru Miyamoto, a friend and mentor of Satoshi, this was a stroke of genius – rather than having the ability to obtain all the monsters with enough dedicated solo play, players were required to engage with the multiplayer functions of the game. Also speaking to **games™**, composer and programmer Junichi Masuda explained, "People say that when you're playing videogames, you're usually playing on your own. So we wanted to create an experience where you can play the game but still play together with friends at the same time and all have fun."

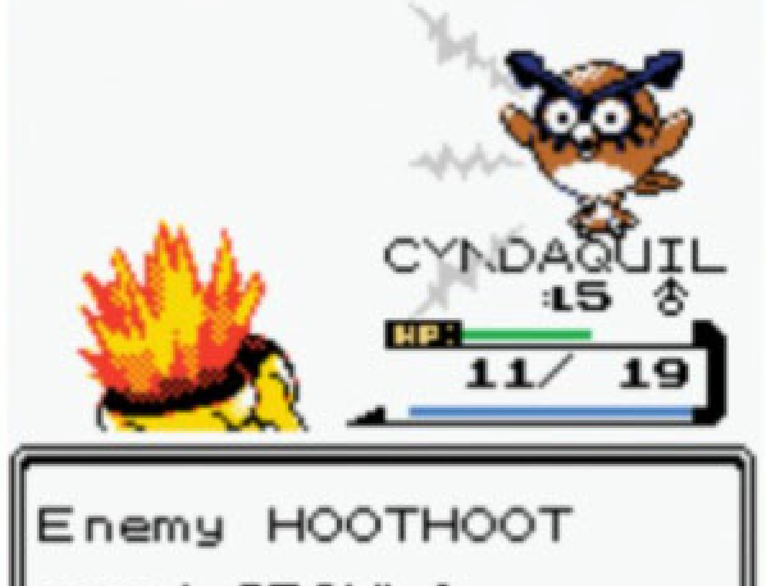


The game went into development, changing titles from *Capsule Monsters* to *Pocket* *Monsters* due to trademark difficulty, and stayed there for a very long time. Despite having been pitched soon after the release of the Game Boy, *Pocket Monsters* wouldn't arrive in Japan until the start of 1996 – a time when the monochrome hardware looked to be on its last legs. *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green* followed the standard RPG model outlined above, with the key differences changing the goal of the game. The single-player quest involved gathering eight badges from battling gym leaders – other trainers that served as bosses – before taking on the Elite Four and your rival, as a final boss run. Once that was done, the social aspect of the game became necessary as you sought to complete your collection of 150 Pokémon.

The wrinkle in the formula was that there was actually another creature, the 151st Pokémon, Mew. The legendary monster was added late in development in space created after the game's debug tools were removed, an untested addition that would be unthinkable today. Luckily, Mew didn't cause problems – it turned out to be something of a solution. Unavailable during regular



» [Game Boy] Quests in the games usually involve ferrying items around or beating up an evil faction.



» [Game Boy Color] *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver* established the convention of adding new Pokémon in sequels.





» [Game Boy Color] While *Gold* and *Silver* supported the GBC, both still worked on the original Game Boy.


» [Game Boy Color] Maps reflected the change from day to night, with towns growing dark and lights switching on.

play, Mew did occasionally appear via glitches and rumours of how to obtain it began to form. Mew was able to be distributed to cartridges at special events, the first of which was a competition in CoroCoro Comics which attracted 70,000 entries. Word of mouth spread and the game's initially sluggish sales turned around, later aided by additional merchandising. Though *Pocket Monsters Red* and *Green* were released in February 1996, they didn't hit their peak sales until the summer of 1997.

After a lengthy localisation delay, *Pocket Monsters* – now retitled *Pokémon*, and in *Red* and *Blue* versions – arrived in the USA in 1998, then Europe and other PAL territories in 1999. The slow build seen in Japan wouldn't be a factor in these territories, as *Pokémon* arrived with a co-ordinated marketing blitz that saw the TV series, trading card game and videogames hit almost simultaneously. A craze started almost overnight, helped along by additional special versions such as *Pokémon Yellow*, which starred Pikachu and took elements from the TV series. Ultimately, the first generation of games sold over 23 million copies. But while the first games were still making waves internationally, a sequel was needed for Japan and arrived in late 1999.

POKÉMON SILVER SCREEN

There's a good chance that your first exposure to the *Pokémon* franchise didn't come from the games but the animated series. It follows Ash Ketchum's adventures as a Pokémon trainer, accompanied by his trusty Pikachu and initially gym leaders Brock and Misty, who were later replaced by a rotating cast of companions. Along the way they take part in gym battles and capture new Pokémon, and are regularly attacked by inept Team Rocket grunts Jessie and James, along with their talking Meowth.

The show has been a huge success and remains in production today, with over 850 episodes produced as well as an astonishing 17 movies. The first film grossed over $163 million worldwide and was briefly the highest-grossing movie based on a videogame – a record later taken by the 2001 adaptation of *Tomb Raider*. However, it's often criticised for poor animation and an overwhelming focus on Ash's Pikachu, who wins battles he really shouldn't.

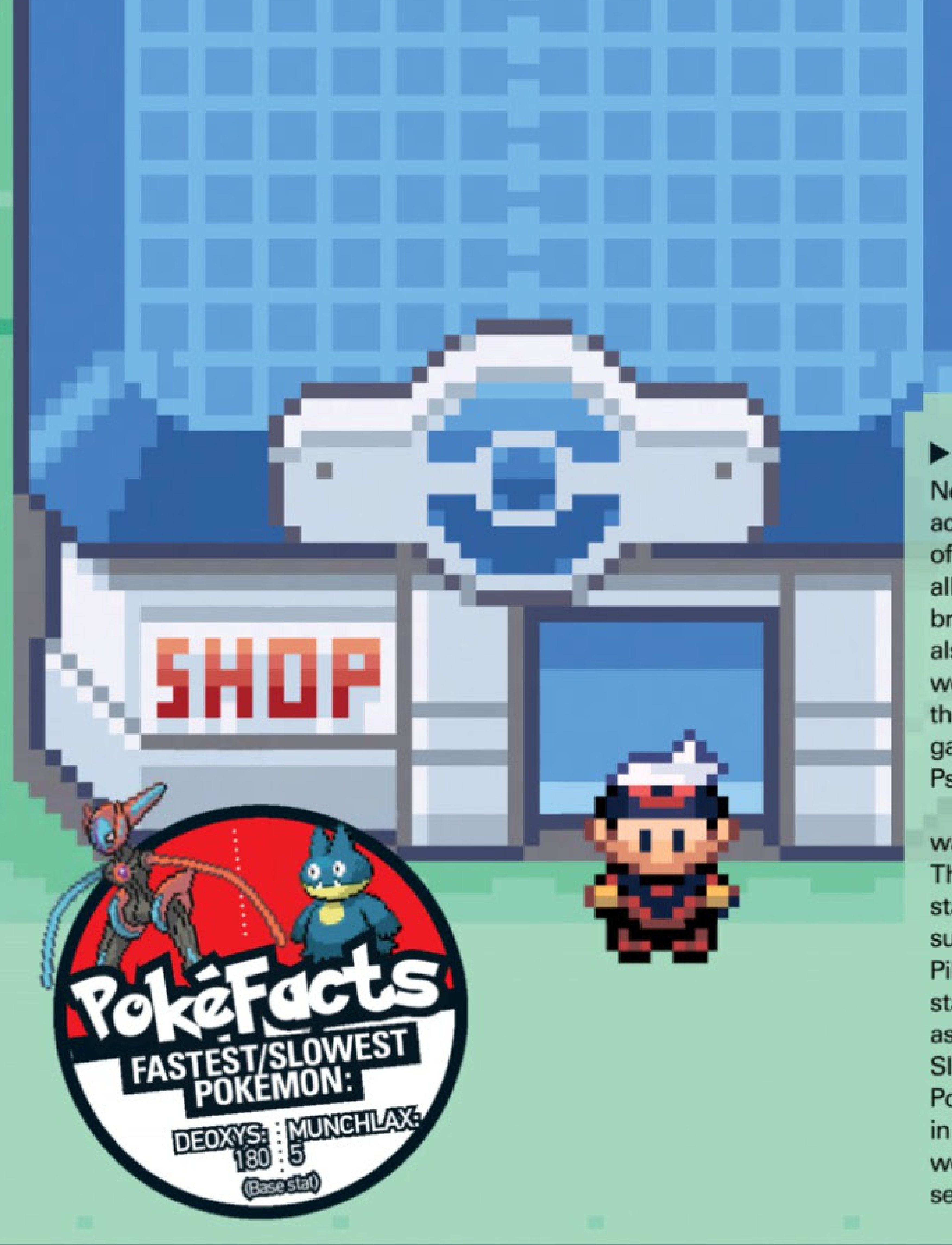
The *Pokémon* cartoon series has had five episodes removed from circulation globally, predominantly to show sensitivity following real-world disasters, along with three more removed from the English-language run due to issues such as use of weaponry. However, the biggest controversy was an episode featuring the virtual Pokémon Porygon, which sent hundreds of Japanese children to hospital in 1997 after triggering fits with flashing imagery.



> **"You can still play together with friends at the same time and all have fun"**
> Junichi Masada extols the social aspect of Pokémon

Pokémon Gold and *Silver* served as the first massive overhaul to the series, providing a brand new quest in a new region, Johto. The most immediately obvious new feature was a visual overhaul as a result of Game Boy Color support. However, the changes went far deeper. A battery-powered real-time clock was included in the cartridge, affecting what happened in-game. Certain Pokémon were more abundant during the day while others could only be found at night, and other events only took place ▶





on specific days of the week. New Pokémon could now also be acquired by breeding almost any of your acquired existing creatures, allowing for exclusive moves. Two brand new types of Pokémon were also included, Dark and Steel, which were intended to redress some of the balance issues with the first game – particularly the dominance of Psychic Pokémon.

However, the big new inclusion was that of 100 new Pokémon. These included extra evolutionary stages for existing Pokémon, such as Pichu, the baby form of Pikachu, and Slowking, a second stage for Slowpoke which serves as an alternative to the first game's Slowbro. Also, another special event Pokémon like Mew was included in the form of Celebi. Junichi, who would become director of the series following *Gold* and *Silver*, explains the philosophy behind new additions: "I always like to come up with the number first. When I'm envisioning what the world is going to be like, I think about what kind of Pokémon people are going to encounter there, and then how many are we going to need, so I come up with the number first usually."


***Pokémon Gold* and *Silver* were massively successful worldwide, achieving 23 million** sales in a much shorter period than the first generation of games due to quicker localisation. An enhanced third version followed with *Pokémon Crystal*, but new hardware was already on the horizon in the form of the Game Boy Advance. A new generation of games was already on the way, this time titled *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire*.

"I always like to come up with the number first"
How Junichi Masada goes about the process of introducing brand new Pokémon to the series

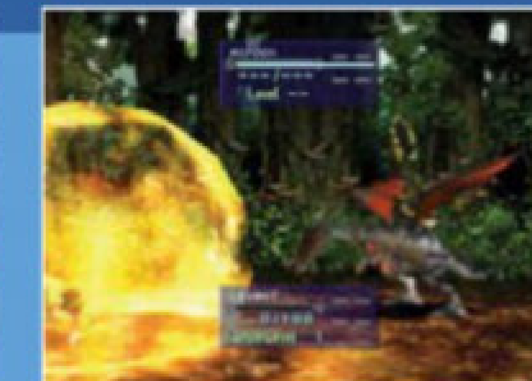
A BREED APART
Lots of alternative monster-raising games are available for hipsters to enjoy…



MONSTER RANCHER
FORMAT: PlayStation
YEAR: 1997
■ Tecmo's spin on the genre offers similar battling gameplay to *Pokémon*, but a very different monster acquisition system. Players generate new creatures by putting music CDs into the PlayStation's disc drive!



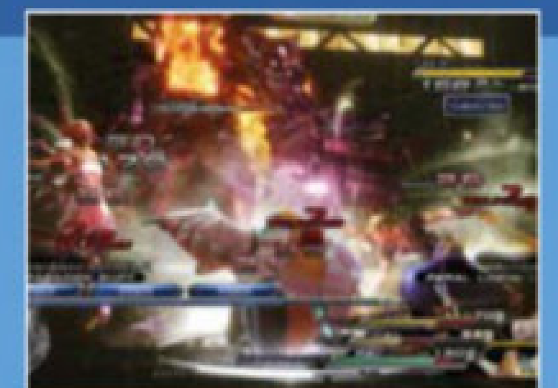
DRAGON WARRIOR MONSTERS
FORMAT: Game Boy Color
YEAR: 1998
■ A spin-off of Enix's RPG series, this was the strongest *Pokémon* competitor on the Game Boy, offering 215 monsters and a deep breeding system which helped set it apart. PlayStation and 3DS remakes have followed.



JADE COCOON
FORMAT: PlayStation
YEAR: 1998
■ The game's unique look was created by Katsuya Kondo, an animator and character designer famed for his work on Studio Ghibli films such as *Kiki's Delivery Service*. Decent sales ensured that a PlayStation 2 sequel followed in 2001.



DIGIMON WORLD
FORMAT: PlayStation
YEAR: 1999
■ Bandai's rival franchise has never scaled the same heights as *Pokémon*, but the games are fondly remembered by those who grew up with them. One difference is that only one partner Digimon accompanies you throughout the main quest.



FINAL FANTASY XIII-2
FORMAT: PS3/Xbox 360
YEAR: 2011
■ The middle child of Square Enix's RPG trilogy lets players capture monsters during battle, to serve as party members. As in *Pokémon Red* and *Blue*, there are roughly 150 monsters to collect and strengthen.

These games took place in another new region, Hoenn. "With the Hoenn region I wanted to go for a feel of abundant nature," explains Junichi. "When I was younger, my grandparents lived in Kyushu and I would visit them, and whenever I was there I'd always be catching bugs, playing in the river, catching fish and stuff like that, so I wanted to bring that feeling of nature to the games." The cohort of new Pokémon included 135 creatures, raising the total number to collect to 386. However, despite support in the code for all 386, only 202 could be caught in *Ruby* and *Sapphire* and trading with previous generations was impossible, creating a problem that the developers would need to solve later. Major improvements were made to the battle system, including team battles in which four Pokémon could fight and a new ability system, which gave Pokémon passive powers that affected battle.

However, the biggest change was an expansion to the non-battling play available, with the inclusion of Pokémon contests in which your creatures would perform their moves in front of a judging panel, in competition with other trainers. "At the time when we were developing the games, we really wanted to think of a way to expand the appeal of the Pokémon games," reveals Junichi. "So we thought of a variety of ways that people could enjoy gameplay with Pokémon without battling them." Despite this attempt to expand the appeal of the series, *Pokémon Ruby* and *Sapphire* didn't sell as well as previous games. However, even a dip below par for *Pokémon* produces results that other series can only dream of – with 16 million copies sold, the games were comfortably the bestselling titles on the Game Boy Advance.

CARD CATCHER

Taking the battles from cartridge to cardboard

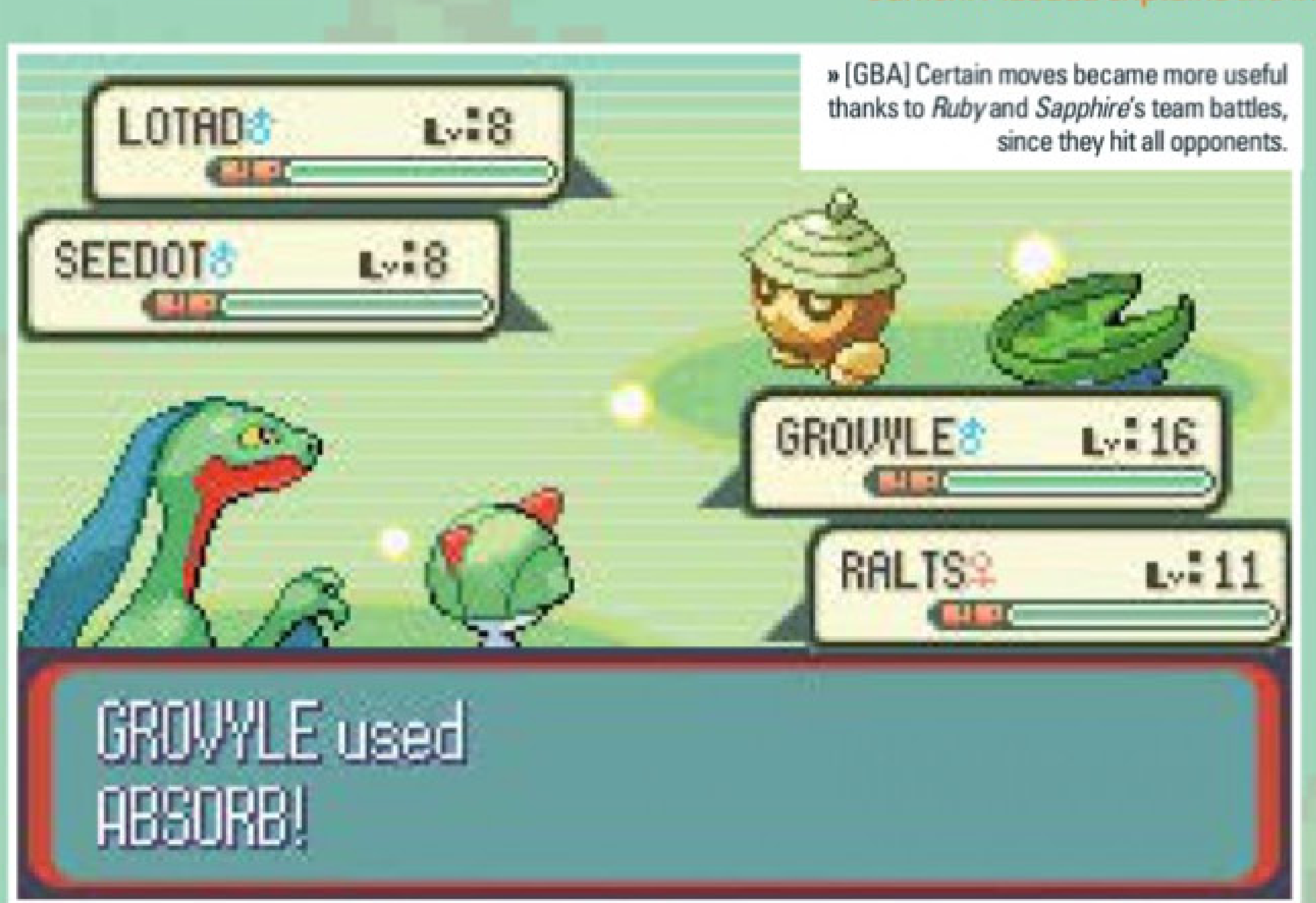
The Pokémon Trading Card Game, first introduced in October 1996 in Japan, is an unusual spin-off product in that has taken on a life beyond that of the videogames. It depicts battles similar to those in the videogames, with a few key differences – Pokémon are able to evolve during the course of the battle, and must utilise Energy cards to attack and retreat. The game ends when either one player has no Pokémon in play, or a player has revealed their six prize cards by knocking out opposing Pokémon.

When *Magic: The Gathering* publisher Wizards Of The Coast licensed the game for English-speaking audiences in the late Nineties, many players ignored the battling gameplay and focused on trading and collecting. The popularity of the cards was such that many schools banned them, fearing problems with thefts and uneven trades. A foil Charizard was the most prized card from the first base set – a first-edition copy in good condition can still fetch a pretty penny today.

The Pokémon Company assumed worldwide control of the game in 2003 and continues to offer it both as a physical card game and a digital version (for PC, Mac and iPad). But if you're looking for a more retro way to enjoy it, the card game received its own GBC adaptations, too. Hudson Soft's 1998 *Pokémon Trading Card Game* tasked the player with beating AI opponents in an RPG-style quest. It was well-received by players and critics alike, selling over two million copies and spawning a Japan-only sequel in 2001, which eventually received a fan translation in 2012.

> "We thought of a variety of ways people could enjoy gameplay with Pokémon without battling them"

Junichi Masada explains the introduction of Pokémon contests



» [GBA] Certain moves became more useful thanks to *Ruby* and *Sapphire*'s team battles, since they hit all opponents.

In 2004, *Pokémon FireRed* and *LeafGreen* were released. These were the first *Pokémon* remakes, and according to Junichi were a part of the plan as soon as the series moved to the Game Boy Advance.

» [GBA] The GBA's graphical prowess allowed the designers to make towns that looked more realistic.



» [GBA] *Ruby* and *Sapphire* introduced rival factions of evildoers to defeat – Team Aqua and Team Magma.

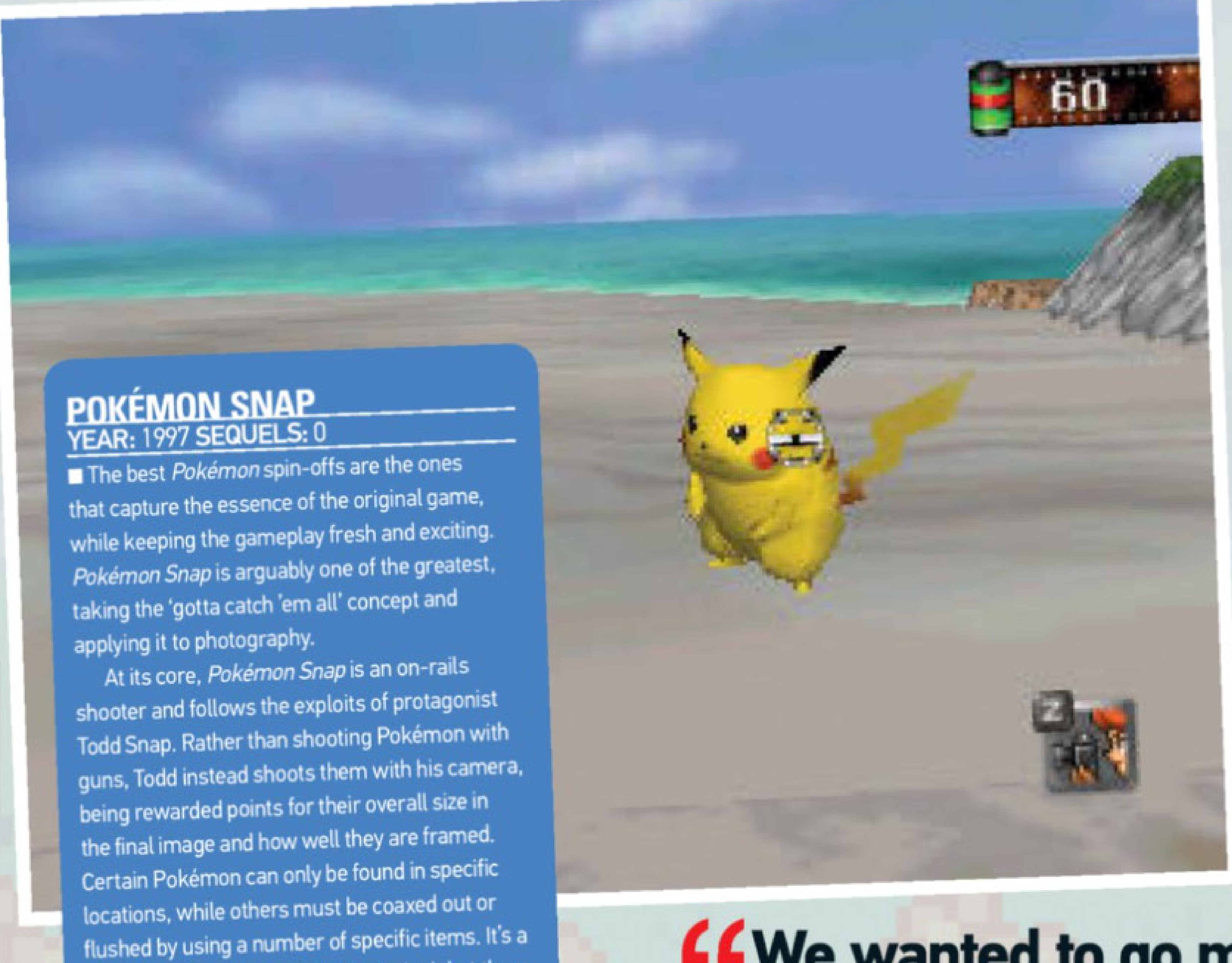


"One of the main reasons [for developing remakes] was really more of a technological reason, as the hardware couldn't communicate with each other between the Game Boy and the Game Boy Advance. Even when we were first developing *Ruby* and *Sapphire* we knew we wanted to players to be able to catch all of the old Pokémon as well as the newer ones." *FireRed* and *LeafGreen* were faithful remakes with improved visuals and some expanded content to include *Ruby* and *Sapphire*'s improvements, most notably an additional post-game quest in the new Sevii Islands region. Success followed once again, with critical acclaim and around 12 million sales.

The Game Boy Advance was superseded by the Nintendo DS at the tail end of 2004, but with *Pokémon FireRed* and *LeafGreen* having just completed their worldwide release cycle, it was clear that all eyes were still on the older systems. While the DS received the forgettable spin-off *Pokémon Dash*, the Game Boy Advance got *Pokémon Emerald*, a substantial game which served a similar purpose to *Pokémon Crystal* by providing an enhanced third version of *Ruby* and *Sapphire*. Fans would have to wait until 2006 to get their hands on the fourth generation of Pokémon games.

THE SPIN-OFFS

There are an insane number of Pokémon offshoots, so Darran decided to look at the best and worst examples



POKÉMON SNAP

YEAR: 1997 **SEQUELS:** 0

■ The best *Pokémon* spin-offs are the ones that capture the essence of the original game, while keeping the gameplay fresh and exciting. *Pokémon Snap* is arguably one of the greatest, taking the 'gotta catch 'em all' concept and applying it to photography.

At its core, *Pokémon Snap* is an on-rails shooter and follows the exploits of protagonist Todd Snap. Rather than shooting Pokémon with guns, Todd instead shoots them with his camera, being rewarded points for their overall size in the final image and how well they are framed. Certain Pokémon can only be found in specific locations, while others must be coaxed out or flushed by using a number of specific items. It's a great game and it's absolutely criminal that there have been no sequels for it.

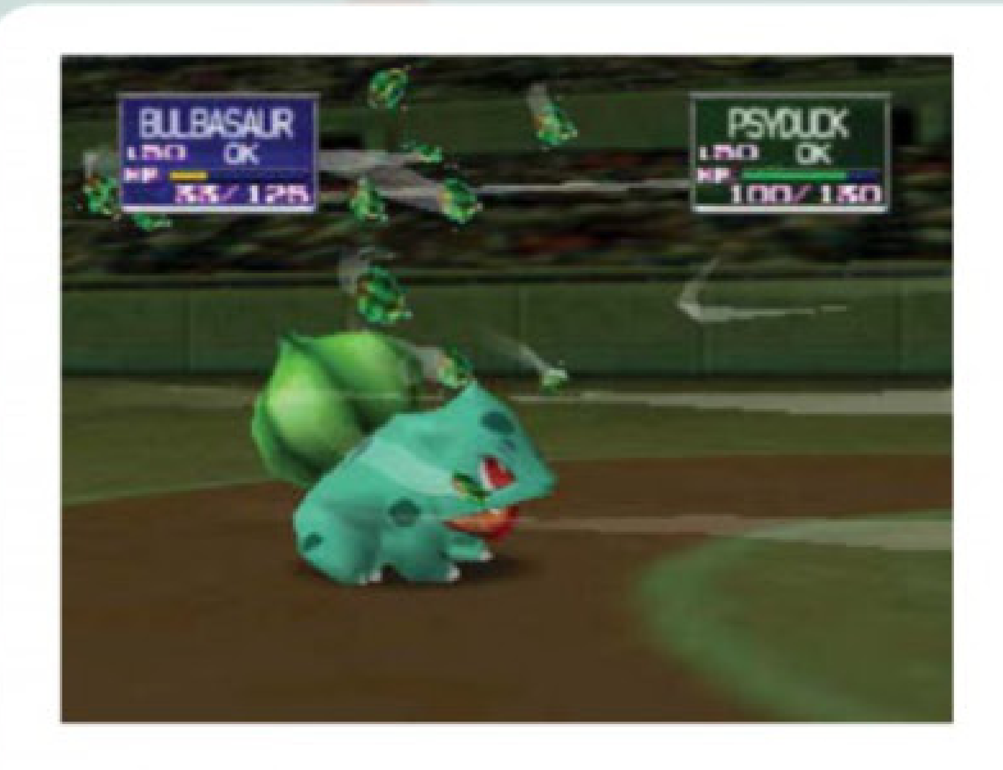
HEY YOU, PIKACHU!

YEAR: 1998 **SEQUELS:** 0

■ No doubt inspired by the interest in Tamagotchi, developer Ambrella clearly thought the concept could be applied to *Pokémon*. It couldn't, as proven by this innovative yet highly disappointing game. Players use the N64's Voice Recognition Unit to interact with Pikachu. It can take part in a variety of activities, from fishing to making stew, but poor controls and rudimentary voice technology make it too frustrating to play. Spirituals sequels exist in the form of *Pokémon Channel* for the GameCube and two *PokéPark* games for the Wii, but they're just as disappointing.



> **"We wanted to go more in-depth and actually have Pokémon appear in the game world"**
>
> Shigeru Ohmori on one of the striking new features in Omega Ruby and Alpha Sapphire





POKÉMON STADIUM

YEAR: 1999 **SEQUELS:** 1

■ When Nintendo revealed Pokémon were heading to the N64, we assumed an awesome 3D-based RPG. We assumed wrong.

Despite our initial disappointment, *Pokémon Stadium* proved an essential addition to any Pokéfan's collection, due to its ability to let you transfer – via the Transfer Pak – Pokémon from *Red* and *Blue* and battle with them in glorious 3D. Fighting takes place across four cups, with the player choosing from six available Pokémon. It's essentially just the scrapping from the original games, but made better due to the impressive-looking visuals. We'd argue the sequel is the better game, however, due to some truly brilliant mini-games.

POKÉMON PINBALL

YEAR: 1999 **SEQUELS:** 1

■ *Pokémon Pinball* was another early Pokémon release that proved Nintendo's pocket monsters were perfectly at home in other genres. It's most memorable for being one of the first Game Boy Color games to feature the underused rumble pack, resulting in an oversized cartridge. While the physics are a little off at times, the two tables – Red and Blue – are well crafted and feature lots of interesting spinners and ramps. Best of all, however, are the 'Catch' and 'Evolution' modes that see you either trying to capture or evolve a specific Pokémon in under two minutes. And if you want that true Pokémon vibe, then use the Pokédex to catch all 151 Pokémon.





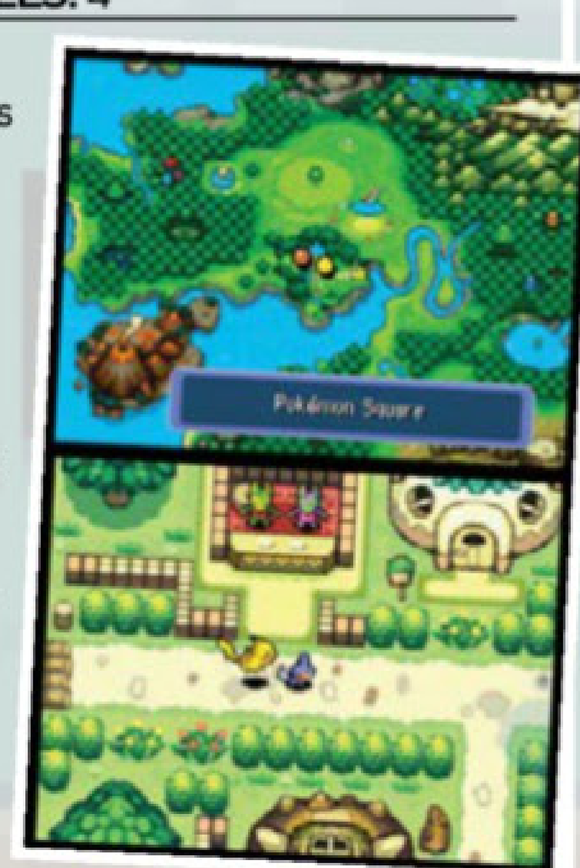
POKÉMON CONQUEST

YEAR: 2012 **SEQUELS:** 0

■ Quite possibly the strangest *Pokémon* game we've played, but a good one to boot. *Pokémon Conquest* is a kiddie-friendly strategy game that splices the popular franchise with Tecmo Koei's *Nobunaga's Ambition* series. It works surprisingly well with the player travelling the Ransei Region, battling Pokémon, warriors and warlords in a bid to unite the region as one nation. It's a vastly different RPG compared to the usual games and offers plenty of tactical play, while its weird crossover status should ensure it becomes quite rare in later years.

POKÉMON MYSTERY DUNGEON

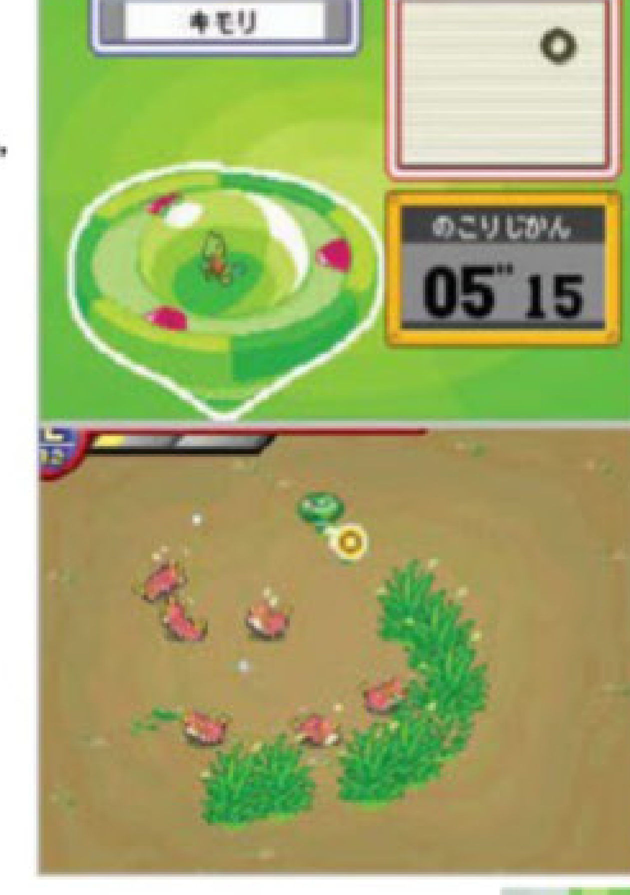
YEAR: 2005 **SEQUELS:** 4



■ The big hook of *Mystery Dungeon* was that it was the first time you could properly play as Pokémon. The fact that its two versions let it link between the Game Boy Advance and DS didn't make it too shabby either. For those unaware, it's effectively Game Freak's spin on the rogue genre, with Pikachu and pals exploring popular locations from the series and taking part in turn-based battles. While easier than most examples of the genre, it's still quite tricky in places and link-up with both versions is crucial if you want to gain access to all the available Pokémon.

POKÉMON RANGER

YEAR: 2006 **SEQUELS:** 2



■ Trust Nintendo to make drawing patterns interesting. Unlike previous *Pokémon* games, *Ranger* requires you to capture Pokémon by drawing specific circles around them. It's clearly used as a justification for the DS's unique control system, but it admittedly works well, getting quite challenging on later stages. Unfortunately, while the mini-game-based capture sections are good fun, the main adventuring is pretty dull and feels quite light compared to typical *Pokémon* adventures.

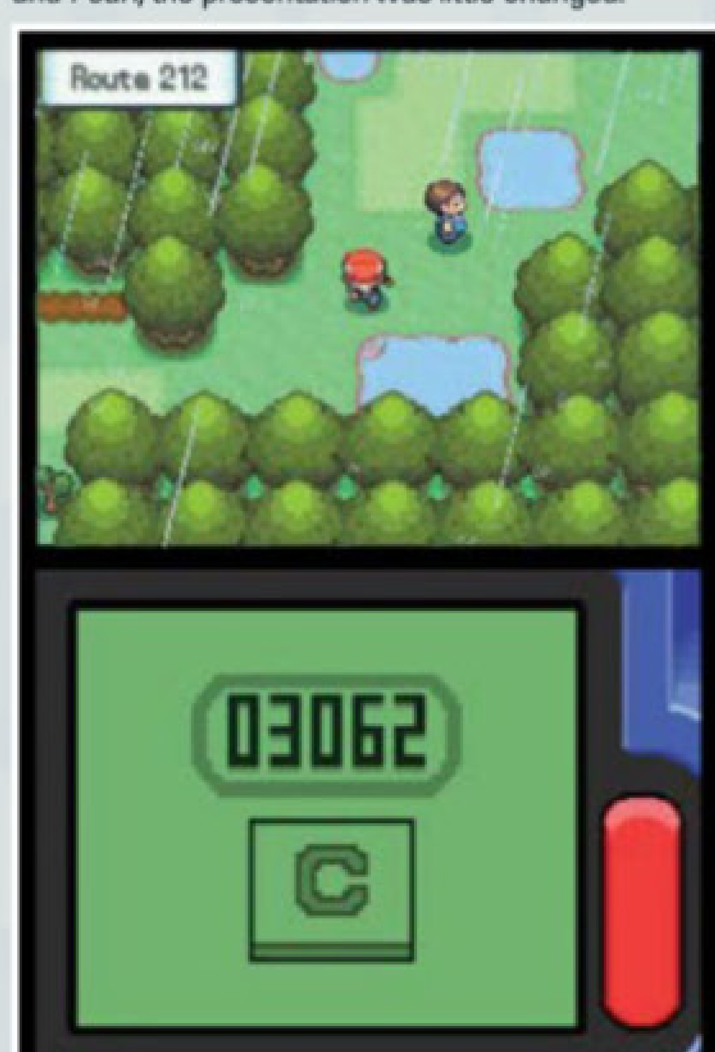
POKÉMON DASH

YEAR: 2004 **SEQUELS:** 0

■ The best thing about this DS launch game was its ability to link up with GBA versions of the available Pokémon to create new courses to race on. Unfortunately, that's the only thing this insipidly dull game has going for it. Racing Pokémon through checkpoint-based courses sounds great fun, but the reality is vastly different due to incredibly bland track design and overly simplistic gameplay. Pikachu runs in whichever direction you swipe, which is as dull as it sounds, while a variety of different terrains and power-ups attempt to inject some entertainment into Ambrella's game.



» [DS] While 3D visuals made their debut in *Diamond* and *Pearl*, the presentation was little changed.



Pokémon Diamond and Pearl brought a raft of changes for fans to enjoy, many of which were by now series standards. The game took place in the brand new Sinnoh region, a large island bisected by a long mountain range. Eight new gym leaders and a new Elite Four were available to battle, and 107 new Pokémon were added for players to catch, bringing the complete total up to 493. The battle system was also further refined, with many attacks reclassified as physical or special based on how they operated – for example, Volt Tackle became a physical attack as it involves one Pokémon making contact with another, while Shadow Ball doesn't and therefore became special. However, the most exciting new possibilities were a direct result of the series' move to a new platform.

For a start, the DS was Nintendo's first handheld platform to be designed for 3D graphics, which had the potential to revolutionise the way the games were presented. However, *Diamond* and *Pearl* were relatively tentative steps into 3D – battles received an improved set of 2D sprites so only the environments were overhauled in 3D, and they rarely offered much functional difference to their 2D counterparts. Still, they did allow for some surprising new design possibilities, as Junichi recalls: "One of the great things about moving to the 3D environments with the DS games was that we could do a lot more dynamic presentation, for example moving the camera around freely. It's kind of hard to explain, but being able to control the camera actually changes the ▶



» [DS] Pokémon can follow you outside of their Poké Balls in the fourth-gen games, a feature that debuted in *Yellow*.

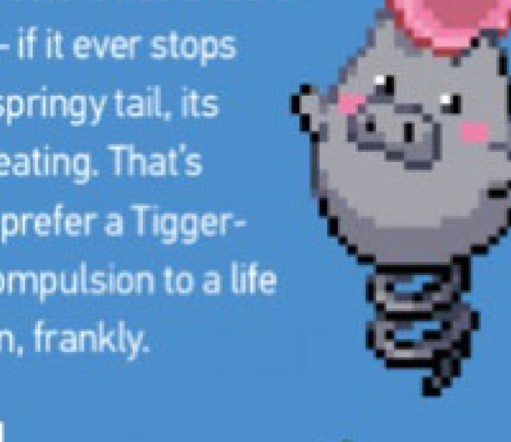
THE UNLIKELY LADS

Some Pokémon that are freaky, unnatural and downright impossible

MAGCARGO

■ With a body temperature stated to be over 18,000 degrees Fahrenheit, this Pokémon is absolutely incredibly hot. How hot? Almost twice as hot as the surface of the sun, which reaches only 9940.73 Fahrenheit, fact fans…

SPOINK



■ This pig-like creature has a rather unfortunate life – if it ever stops bouncing on its springy tail, its heart will stop beating. That's right, it dies. We prefer a Tigger-esque state of compulsion to a life or death situation, frankly.

TRUBBISH

■ It's a bin bag! More specifically, it's a bin bag with tie-top ears, a broken glass mouth and arms that look like spilled waste, formed from a chemical reaction within domestic and industrial waste. This makes perfect sense, of course.

YAMASK

■ This ghostly Pokémon retains memories of its former life, as well as a mask it occasionally looks at while weeping. Oh yes, and these guys are human ghosts – so what awaits you in the afterlife, it seems, is captivity. Sweet dreams.

VANILLITE



■ Created by British designer James Turner, Vanillite is a Pokémon which strongly resembles an ice cream cone. In fact, its snowy topping can be made to melt, exposing a bald, icy head. It gains extra scoops as it evolves, too.

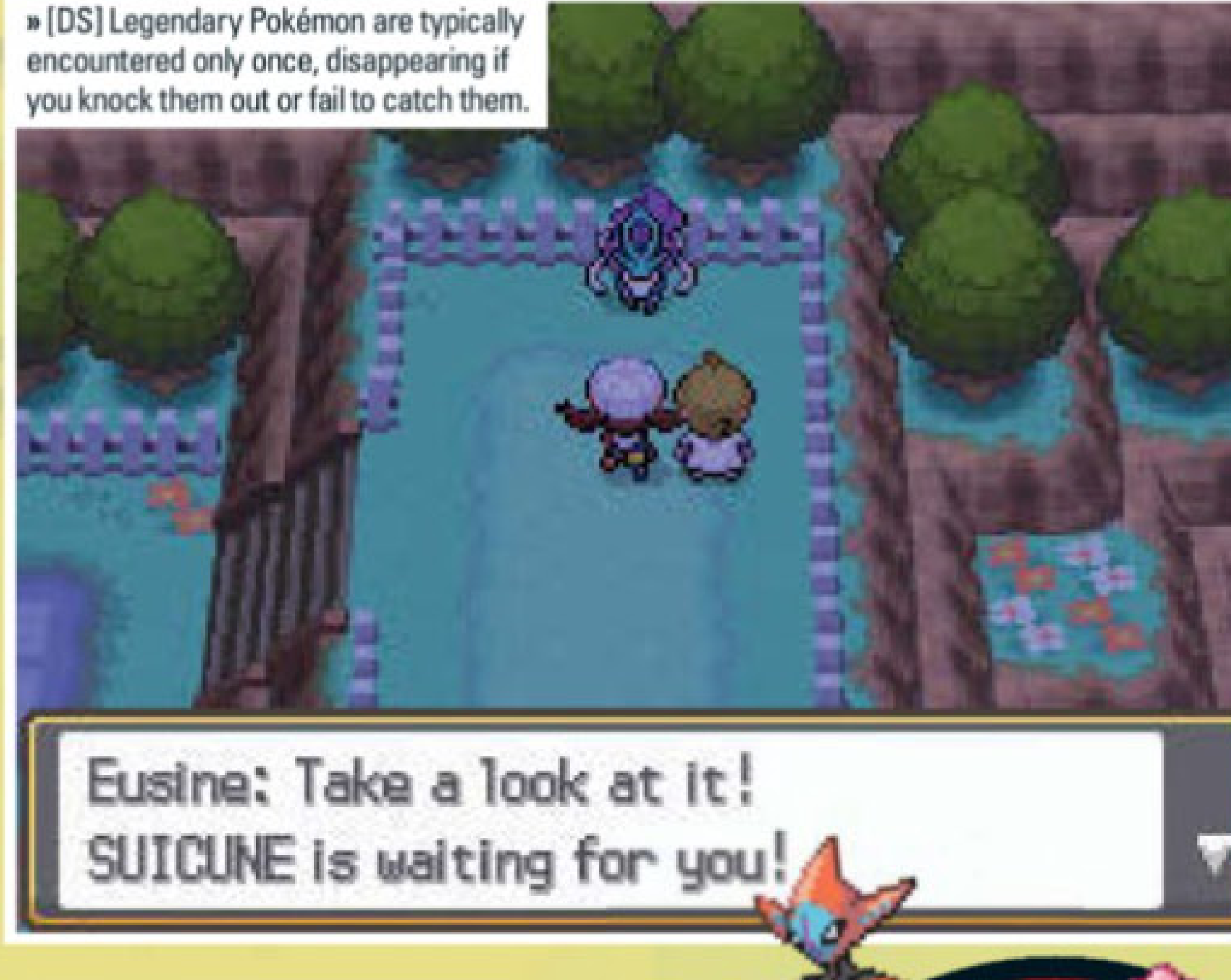
▶ balance of the game quite a bit." In *Diamond* and *Pearl*, you can see this best in the design of the gyms – for example, a low camera angle in Eterna Gym allows trainers to hide behind trees.

The other massive change was the addition of online connectivity. The DS was Nintendo's first real foray into online gaming, and Pokémon was a key part of the software supporting the move. For the first time ever, players with access to a wireless internet connection could battle and trade their Pokémon without being in close proximity to one another, and without the need for additional peripherals. It was a huge step forward for players looking to complete their collections and prove their teams against trainers worldwide. However, the advent of online play meant that nobody ever needed to leave their home to catch 'em all. It's at this point that creating a main series Pokémon game for home consoles might have seemed most appealing, and it's something fans have often requested. However, Junichi sees things differently.

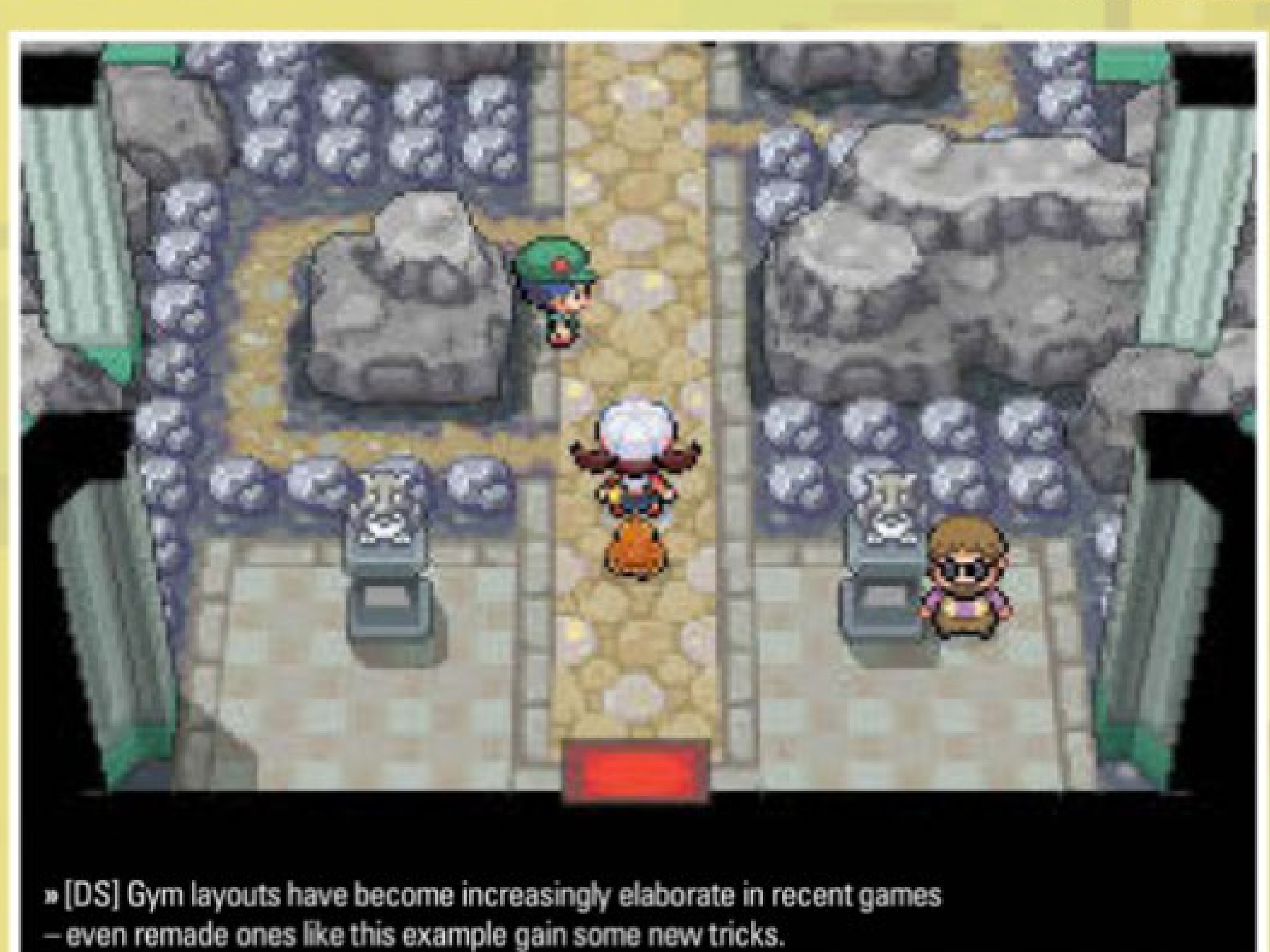
"One of the reasons that we continue to feel that handheld platforms are the best place for *Pokémon* is that with a handheld platform, you can take the game with you. We really like to focus on creating incentive for people to meet up with each other in real life. For example, if there's a special Pokémon distribution, people will go to meet each other and fans will talk… about the games. Creating that kind of atmosphere, kind of like a festival, is something that we really like with the *Pokémon* games. Obviously you can also play them at home alone now, and that's another way to play, but being able to do both of them is one of the best parts of being on a handheld platform."

It's an understandable position, especially as the handheld games continue to perform so well. *Pokémon Diamond* and *Pearl* sold a combined 18 million and were followed by an enhanced third version in 2008, *Pokémon Platinum*. A fifth generation of games was on the way, but once again a remake project would serve as an interlude. *Pokémon HeartGold* and *SoulSilver* remade *Gold* and *Silver* as full fourth-generation *Pokémon* games, with brand new visuals and all of the system changes that had been implemented. They also came bundled with the Pokéwalker, an LCD toy that allowed players to transfer their Pokémon from the cartridge via an infrared link and raise their stats simply by walking around. The

» [DS] Legendary Pokémon are typically encountered only once, disappearing if you knock them out or fail to catch them.



PokéFacts
STRONGEST/WEAKEST ATTACK POKEMON:
DEOXYS: 230 | IGGLYPUFF: 15
(Base stat)



» [DS] Gym layouts have become increasingly elaborate in recent games – even remade ones like this example gain some new tricks.



» [DS] Unova's urban design was inspired by metropolises such as New York, with tall buildings and subway tunnels.



» [DS] The urban regions of *Black* and *White* look more realistic, thanks to less grid-based map design.

device also allowed players to obtain items and catch extra Pokémon, but was sadly not compatible with future games in the series.

The fifth generation of games, launching with *Pokémon Black* and *White*, was in some ways a radical departure from previous entries in the series. "The main goal with *Black* and *White* was to make the same experience for existing *Pokémon* fans as well as brand new players," explains Junichi, "so everyone playing the game would experience the same surprises and joy." In practice, this meant that for the first time in the series, the only Pokémon players could encounter were the new ones. It was a welcome change for fans who had experienced over a decade of caverns filled with Zubats and Geodudes, and older Pokémon once again became available after the Elite Four were beaten.

Other improvements were also seen. The new Unova region, an urban area inspired by the state of New York, was the best-looking yet thanks to improved 3D visuals and map designs that were no longer constrained to grids as in previous games. Seasons now passed as well as time, though at an accelerated rate of one per month, and Pokémon contests were replaced with the upgraded Pokémon musicals. There was also a Pokémon Dream World feature, which enabled Pokémon to be sent to the internet to obtain otherwise unobtainable Pokémon. This feature has sadly been closed.

Over 15 million copies of *Pokémon Black* and *White* were sold following the games' release in 2010, marking another success and ensuring the production of the now-traditional enhanced version. However, one more surprising break with tradition was left: a traditionally numbered sequel. "With *Black* and *White*, a lot of things from a story perspective were left unfinished, some of which were done on purpose. A lot of the staff really wanted to revisit those and tie up some of the loose ends," Junichi recalls. "I remember at the time a lot of people were expecting a *Pokémon Grey* to come out, but I knew originally that I wanted to put out two versions for the game that came after *Black* and *White*, as we had a lot of ideas we wanted to implement with that – two versions, we'd set the story two years later, and with various other elements of 'two' we thought we'd put that in the name." The games boasted greater differences than previous enhanced versions, with a substantially different story and new locations.


» [3DS] Old Pokémon like Mewtwo have been updated for the first time in generations, due to the new Mega Evolutions.

> **"We really like to focus on creating incentive for people to meet up with each other in real life"**
>
> Why the main series sticks to handheld systems, according to Junich Masada

Pokémon Black 2 and *White 2* were the swansong of the Nintendo DS, which had already been superseded by the 3DS when they were released in 2012. Nintendo's latest handheld saw its first major *Pokémon* release late in 2013, with *Pokémon X* and *Y* marking the series' first simultaneous worldwide release. Battles now take place with full 3D visuals of the kind previously seen in console games like *Pokémon Stadium*, and players are finally set free from four-way grid movement. A new Fairy type has also been added, in order to balance the previously strong Dragon type.

But the biggest change concerns Pokémon evolution. "One of the reasons why people like Pokémon is the fact that they evolve, so we wanted to think of a way to make this even more appealing," says Junichi, "so I discussed this with the battle system designers, the graphic designers and we came up with the idea of a Mega Evolution that would take place just during the battle."

» [3DS] *Omega Ruby* and *Alpha Sapphire* introduce the Soar mechanic, providing impressive views of Hoenn.

Previously, Pokémon could only change forms by evolving outside of battle. The new Mega Evolutions require Pokémon to be given Mega Stones to hold and they only happen during battle, reverting once the fight is over. "I really like Charizard, and I also like the Mega Evolutions of Charizard, but if it stayed like that I'd miss the old Charizard," he explains, offering some insight into why the Mega Evolutions are temporary.

With *Pokémon X* and *Y* enjoying strong sales, it's something of a surprise that the latest remake project has arrived so quickly. *Pokémon Omega Ruby* and *Alpha Sapphire* will hit the shelves shortly after this issue and are being directed by Shigeru Ohmori, who started as a map designer on the original *Ruby* and *Sapphire*. We've already noticed some striking new features in the new games. "One of the things is that you'll actually hear Pokémon cries as you're walking around the environment," Shigeru tells us, "but we wanted to go more in-depth with that and actually have Pokémon appear in the game world. For example, you'd see their silhouette or a Pokémon flying overhead." This isn't just an aesthetic change – you can now identify Pokémon sticking out from the tall grass and even pre-identify their level and moves, marking the first move away from random battles.

If you've only ever experienced *Pokémon* passively, it's easy to write the series off as a late-Nineties kids fad, but this is a flawed perspective – with the original kids now grown up and still playing, the continued multimillion sales of the series rest on more than trends. You can see brand loyalty driving fan projects like Twitch Plays Pokémon, in which thousands of players collaborated in a chat room to complete *Pokémon Red* on a live stream. The truth is that the *Pokémon* games inspire that loyalty among fans because they're deceptively deep RPGs, with battle systems that have been stretched by dedicated players and multiplayer features that truly bring players together. In the age of online gaming, a game that can still pack players into the same room is a real retro classic – and that's exactly what *Pokémon* is. *

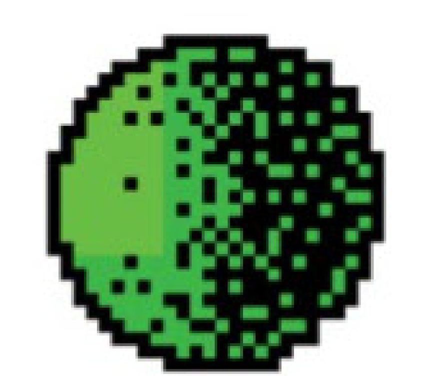
PokéFacts
STRONGEST/WEAKEST DEFENSE POKEMON:
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(Base stat)

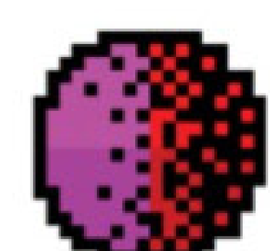

» [3DS] Pokémon are used in a decorative sense on the 3DS, making them appear natural within their world.



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** HEWSON CONSULTANTS
» **DEVELOPER:** HEWSON CONSULTANTS
» **RELEASED:** 1987
» **PLATFORM:** VARIOUS
» **GENRE:** RUN-AND-GUN







Exolon

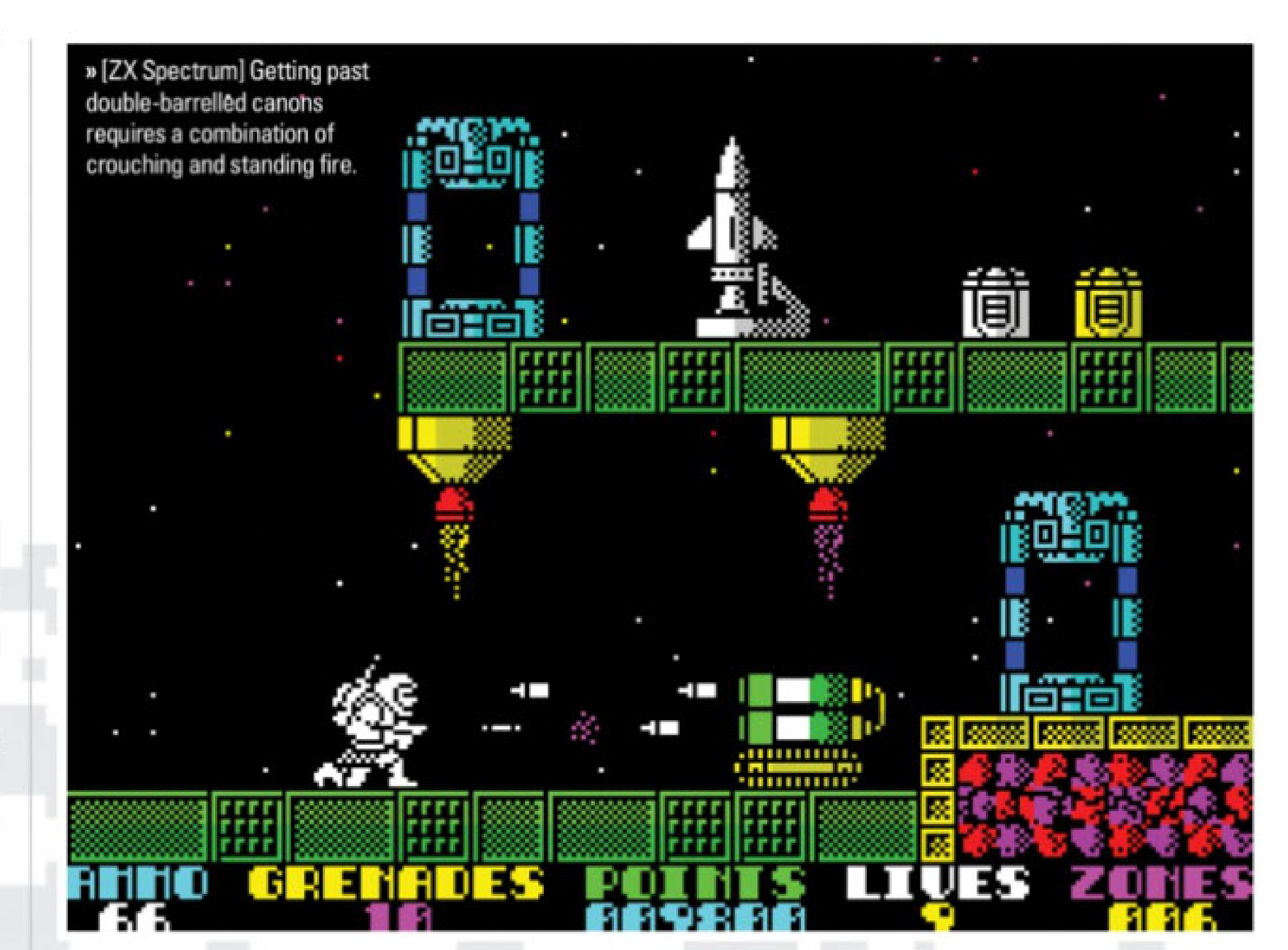
Having learned his trade at Mikro-Gen, Raffaele Cecco made his name freelancing for Hewson Consultants. Rory Milne finds out how he ensured his debut Hewson title Exolon went off with a bang

When asked about his transition from in-house Mikro-Gen coder to freelance developer, Raffaele Cecco isn't sentimental. "Things weren't going well at Mikro-Gen after the failure of their Micro-Plus game *Shadow Of The Unicorn*. All the programmers had worked in a separate office away from the rest of the company, but we'd been merged into the new offices along with all the other staff. I think all the coders had itchy feet by then and it was just a matter of time before we all left, so [there was] no emotional wrench at all really."

Mikro-Gen felt differently, however, and so, as consolation, Raffaele developed his first freelance project for the firm – while also designing a second more ambitious title. "I don't think they were very pleased I was leaving, so I agreed to do the *Cop-Out* game on a freelance basis as a peace offering. Inspired by a 'cops and robbers' shooter I'd seen in an arcade, it didn't really need much work, so I did that while designing *Exolon*. My 'office' was already set up, as most programmers would have their own computer at home to experiment on in those days."

Exolon would share *Cop-Out*'s arcade sensibilities and linear gameplay but also the puzzles and expansive nature of Raffaele's earlier map-based shooter *Equinox*. "Flick-screen games obviously had all the action and puzzles designed to work on individual screens – all that happened with *Exolon* was that there was only one exit point on each screen as opposed to up to four in *Equinox*. The design was a little easier, as I didn't have to worry about lock-and-key puzzles across multiple screens, so I could focus on the arcade elements a bit more. *Equinox* was a bit light on arcade elements, so I definitely wanted to add more into *Exolon*."

Gloriously over-the-top explosions and near-constant firefights would prove to be *Exolon*'s most memorable arcade elements, with Hollywood inspiring these as much as earlier games. "I vaguely remember being influenced by games like *Commando* and *Jet Pac*, and, of course, the 1980s was the decade of *Rambo*, *Terminator* etc, so [there was] no shortage of influence there either."

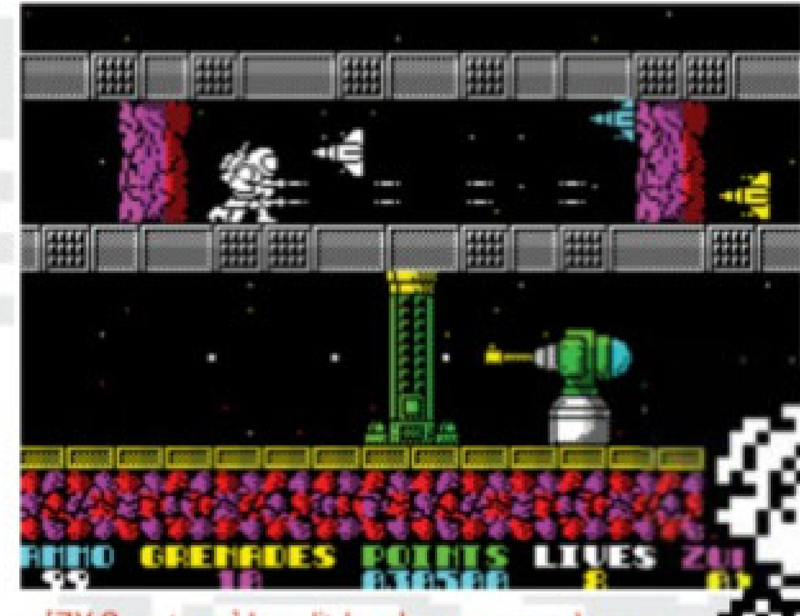


» [ZX Spectrum] Getting past double-barrelled canons requires a combination of crouching and standing fire.

"Equinox was a bit light on arcade elements, so I definitely wanted to add more into Exolon"
Raffaele Cecco

Having found *Exolon*'s direction, Raffaele chose on-screen design over detailed storyboarding as his starting point and asked animator Nigel Brownjohn to design his game's main character. "Knowing how I work, I doubt there were many notated sketches! [There] would have been on-screen visuals, as I really can't draw at all. I preferred to dive straight in and get something up and running as soon as possible. I remember using squared paper to layout the basic positioning of things on each screen, though. All the tweaking was done by playing and adjusting. At Mikro-Gen we used a custom package to draw graphics on that actually ran on the Spectrum! I believe Chris Hinsley had developed that before I joined, and it was hooked up via a cable to the development machine where you would upload the graphics. When I left Mikro-Gen, I continued using that package for a while. You would draw by moving the cursor around with keys and [using] the space bar to add or remove pixels. It was designed for speed. Nigel Brownjohn was a brilliant animator and I asked him early on to design the character. I believe I added the exoskeleton armour and double-gun myself, which was easy to do over the base animated character."

However, long before powering-up *Exolon*'s player character Vitorc and soon after designing the game's first bitmaps, Raffaele had started work on coding. "Definitely as soon as I had some basic initial graphics – I'm far ▶



» [ZX Spectrum] In split-level zones, you choose levels via the previous stage's higher or lower exit.



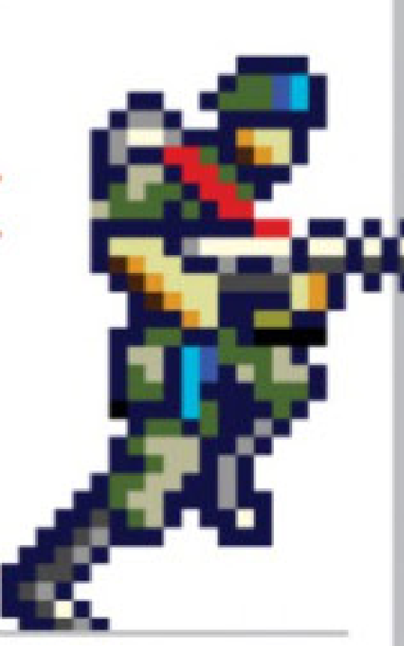
» [ZX Spectrum] Large obstacles can usually be blown to pieces with a rocket-launched grenade.

RUN-AND-GUN CLASSICS

Other memorable titles from the popular subgenre

GREEN BERET

SYSTEM: Arcade YEAR: 1985



■ Hopefully flame-throwers and bazookas count as guns, otherwise *Green Beret* is a 'roast-and-boom'. Semantics aside, Konami's tough coin-guzzler created a template for the run-and-gun titles that followed, and it still provides a stiff challenge.

COBRA

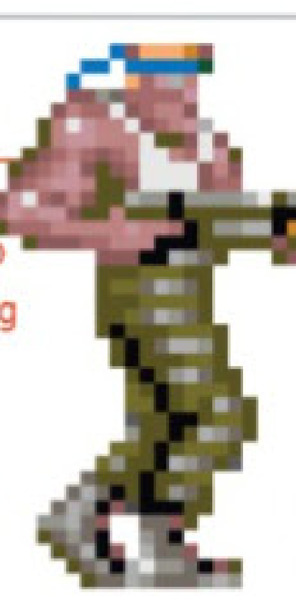
SYSTEM: Various YEAR: 1986



■ Having developed the Spectrum *Green Beret*, it's unsurprising that Joffa Smith's *Cobra* offers similar, but evolved, gameplay. The disappointing C64 and CPC versions are completely different games, but Joffa's Spectrum *Cobra* is a slick combination of violence, humour and gunplay.

CONTRA

SYSTEM: Arcade YEAR: 1987



■ Responsible for introducing two-player co-op to the genre and memorable for mixing scrolling and into-the-screen viewpoints, *Contra* – aka *Gryzor* or *Probotector* in some regions – also gave its protagonists multidirectional gunfire, which soon became a run-and-gun trope.

ROBOCOP

SYSTEM: Arcade YEAR: 1988



■ Ocean's home computer *RoboCop* and Data East's coin-op share similar mechanics: both opt for side-scrolling and into-the-screen sections and eight-way firing for the lead character. Ocean's adaptations were extremely popular – particularly the chart-topping Spectrum version.

GUNSTAR HEROES

SYSTEM: Various YEAR: 1993



■ Treasure built its debut title on the foundations of the Eighties run-and-gun. But the studio updated the genre by giving its heroes an extensive arsenal and its game a breathless series of cinematic set-pieces punctuated by intricately animated screen-sized bosses.

METAL SLUG

SYSTEM: Arcade YEAR: 1996

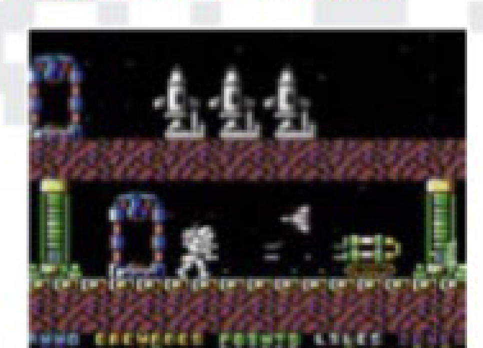


■ Apart from freeing POWs and short stints in a tank, *Metal Slug* is a pure run-and-gun with the simple objective of dispatching soldiers and taking on end-of-level bosses. Lovingly crafted pixel-art and perfectly pitched gameplay make this a genre standout.

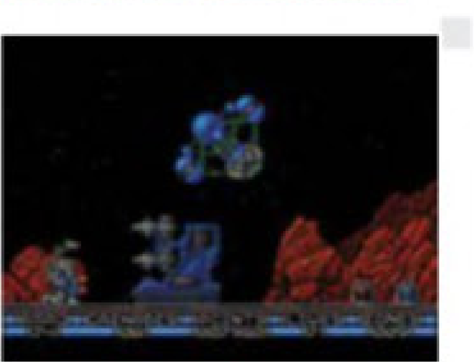


» [ZX Spectrum] Alien birth-pods can be ruptured with a grenade, but their occupants require multiple shots to dispatch.

> **"Each screen was a simple, self-contained puzzle in many respects"**
> Raffaele Cecco



» [Amstrad] This excellent version only took Raffaele Cecco a couple of days to produce.



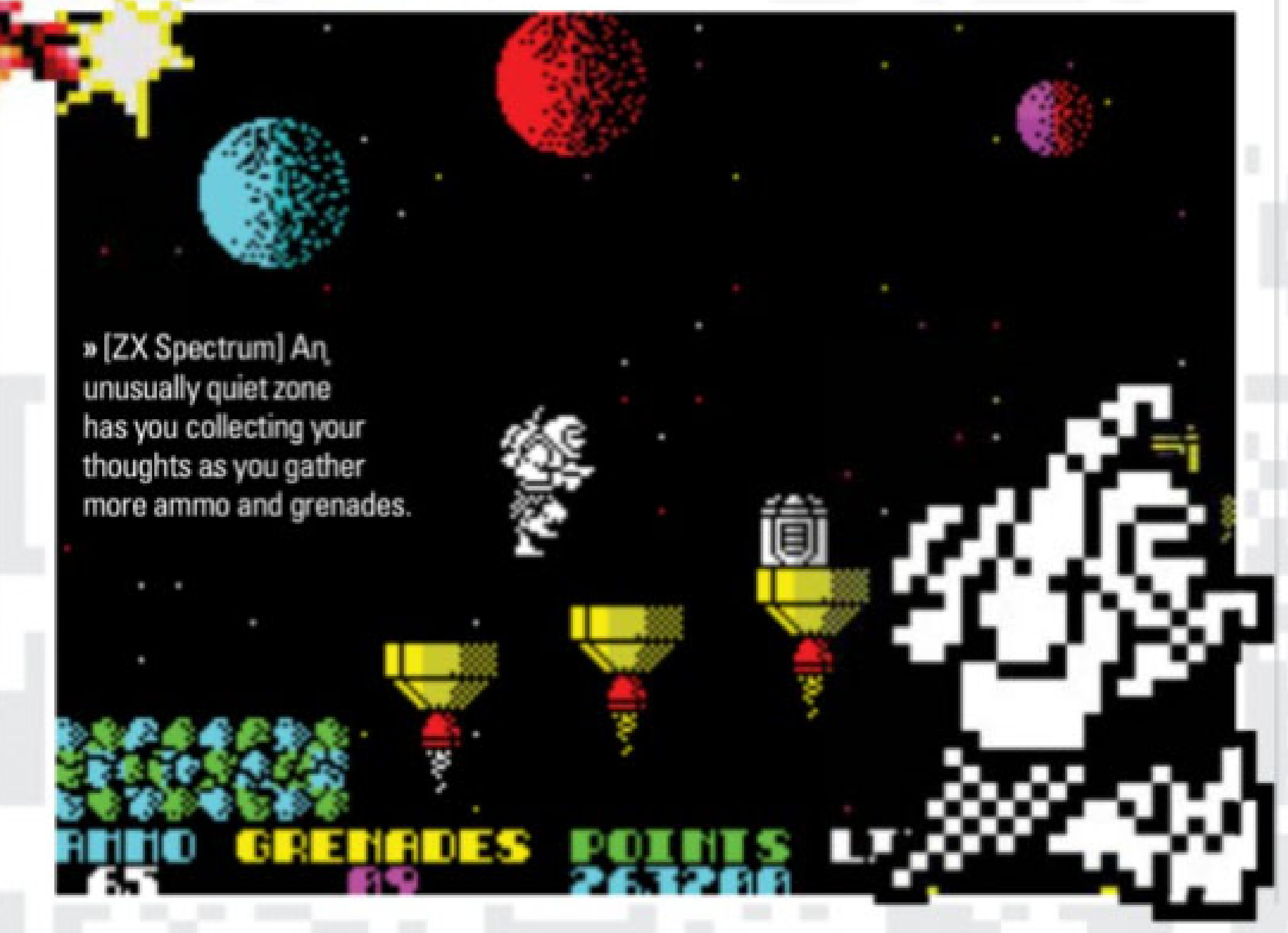
» [C64] Nick Jones coded the C64 *Exolon*, using graphics from the Spectrum and Amstrad games.

» [Amiga] Raffaele Cecco didn't develop the 16-bit versions, but admired their colourful graphics.

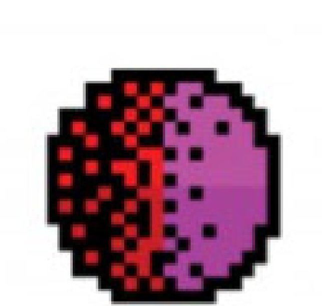
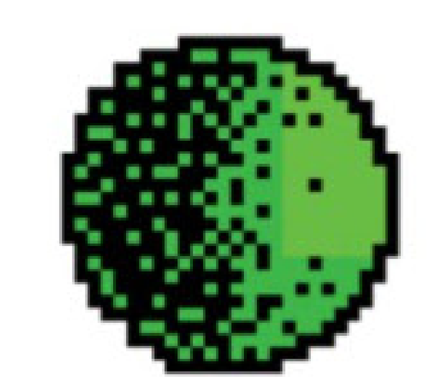
▶ too impatient to wait for loads of graphics to be drawn before starting coding. I may have used a few concepts from earlier games, but most of the code would have been written from scratch. Techniques were still evolving on the Spectrum and you always wanted to do something new and push things further. I used a 'portable' CP/M machine – a very old OS, even older than MS-DOS. The computer had twin floppy drives and a small green screen. The lid had the keyboard built-in and the whole thing was about the size of a small suitcase. You connected the Spectrum to this machine via the Spectrum's joystick port, which had been hacked to act like a serial port. You would write the program in Word Star – an old word processor – compile it with a Z80 compiler and then send it down to the Spectrum to test. That was state-of-the-art back then, albeit rather slow."

Developing *Exolon*'s code and graphics concurrently and outsourcing Vitorc's animation soon allowed Raffaele to produce a demo to show around. Happily, Hewson shared Raffaele's appetite for destruction and respected his freelance status. "I had the first few screens created and Andrew Hewson particularly liked the backpack rocket that shot out and blew up obstacles. There was no desire to develop in-house, especially as I'd already made good progress on my own."

With a publisher in place, Raffaele was free to expand on the set-piece visual elements that would help define *Exolon*. "The rocket launcher was added for a twist to the shooting gameplay, instead of just solely relying on the handheld blaster to shoot aliens. It was a simple gameplay rule: moving aliens were shot with the blaster; large static obstacles required rockets. I suppose the rocket launcher's use was rather like a grenade in other games. The exoskeleton and double-gun was just a classic 'power-up' mode, loosely analogous to Mario picking up a mushroom and getting bigger and faster. I had initially thought that a pick-up should activate it, but instead I opted for the changing-room device, which made it altogether more interesting. The alien double-barrel gun was evolved from wanting the player to encounter a situation where he had to walk, duck and fire very quickly. I used a similar idea in *Cybernoid* where you had to quickly hop over obstacles and hide in little ditches while a gun fired at you. The guided missile was added for a sense of immediate panic when you entered a scene. As soon as you saw it, you knew you had to reach cover or destroy the control beacon within a few seconds. I vaguely remember the teleporters being influenced by the movie *The Fly* starring Jeff Goldblum – although I may be mistaken. They



» [ZX Spectrum] An unusually quiet zone has you collecting your thoughts as you gather more ammo and grenades.

RAFFAELE'S RESUMÉ Selected classics from Raffaele Cecco's CV



CYBERNOID

SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1988

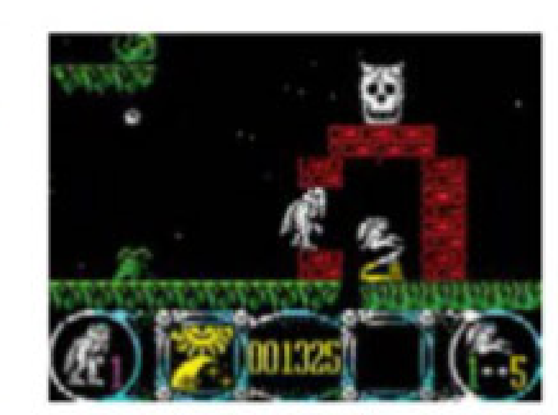
■ Remembered for its unforgiving nature, Raffaele's shooter/puzzler is just as noteworthy for its well-defined multi-hued graphics and superlative 128K music and effects. Once its controls are acclimatised to, the title's gameplay easily matches its accomplished aesthetics.



CYBERNOID II

SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1988

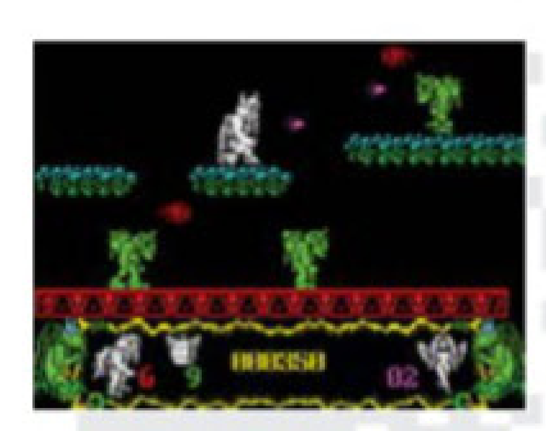
■ While resembling its predecessor, *Cybernoid II* plays slightly differently; its larger ship makes slower progress since it has less room to manoeuvre. This isn't a bad thing, though, as the title still delivers on gameplay and impresses with colourful animated bosses.



STORMLORD

SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1989

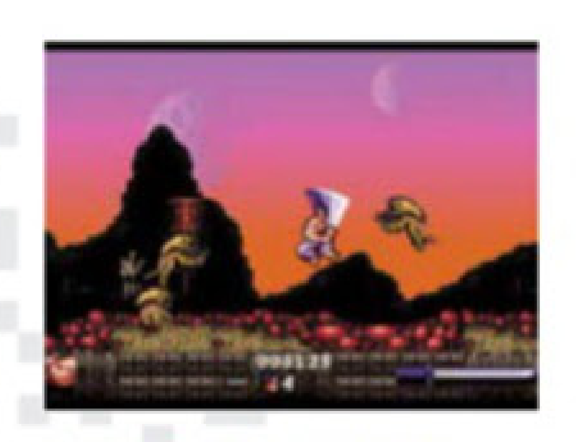
■ A spiritual successor to *Exolon* – albeit one that differs thematically and mechanically. *Stormlord*'s beautiful fantasy setting plays host to a scrolling run-and-gun with object-based puzzles. Its objectives may be straightforward, but their implementation is quite sophisticated.



DELIVERANCE

SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1990

■ *Stormlord's* sequel adopts a different approach. Instead of puzzles and exploration, *Deliverance* features platforming and shooting with selectable weapons, a double/triple jump and dragon riding. It's also visually stunning in places and a worthy, if demanding, follow-up.



FIRST SAMURAI

SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1991

■ An accomplished hack-and-slash platformer, *First Samurai* deserves a much higher profile than its poor sales left it with. Sadly, Mirrorsoft's collapse days after its release meant that many never experienced the title's absorbing gameplay, smooth animation and sumptuous pixel-art.



SECOND SAMURAI

SYSTEM: Various
YEAR: 1993

■ Aside from its simultaneous two-player mode, *Second Samurai* retains the look and feel of its predecessor. But whereas *First Samurai*'s stages demand exploration, this second incarnation offers more linear levels with interactive environments and surreal bosses.

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certainly worked in a similar way. The birth-pods were actually influenced by the swarmers in the coin-op *Defender.*"

Of course, Raffaele still had to assemble these component parts into various combinations to create *Exolon*'s many challenging levels. "Once I had my 'palette' of gameplay elements, it was actually rather easy to design each screen – to mock up the positions and distances of things on squared paper and get them working in the game. Being an 'instant death' game, I had to make sure you didn't end up in too many situations where a number of obstacles and aliens made it impossible to get through without being hit. As the game progressed, I made the layouts tighter with fewer life-saving gaps between elements. Each screen was a simple, self-contained puzzle in many respects, and that idea was later expanded on in *Cybernoid.* The split-screens were added to make full use of the screen area once the player had become acclimatised to the controls and mechanics, and to add variety for the next time you played."

As *Exolon*'s mechanics evolved, Raffaele enabled sprites to pass behind foreground scenery and accelerate according to size, and made alien movements and numbers random – although his memories of how have faded slightly. "I have to admit to being rather hazy about how things were done, but… the 8x8 foreground blocks were just done by splatting them on after the sprites had been drawn. The different sprite routines were probably optimised for sprite size to get the last drop of performance out of the Spectrum, and the aliens moved around via pre-stored paths with an initial random vertical position."

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

URIDIUM
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1986

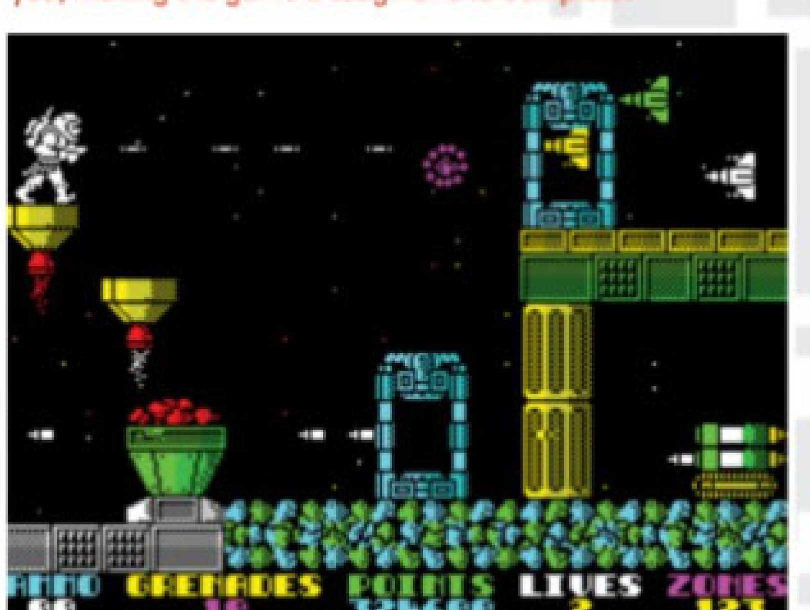
ZYNAPS
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1987

NEBULUS (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: VARIOUS
YEAR: 1987

Aside from coding and visual wizardry, Raffaele strived to complete *Exolon*'s numerous levels as ex-Mikro-Gen cohort Nick Jones worked wonders with the Spectrum 128K's sound chip and contributed ideas – as did an attentive Hewson Consultants. "Nick got roped into doing music because he was a pretty good pianist as well as an excellent programmer. I do remember really liking the tune for *Exolon.* I'm not sure about the sound effects – it may have been Dave Rogers who did those, although I can't remember for sure. I've no doubt everyone pitched in game ideas, but I don't remember any specifics. I do remember Andrew Hewson suggesting 'Exolon' as a name – because of the character's exoskeleton mode – and also naming the birth-pods in the game. I don't remember any glaring technical issues with *Exolon.* It was mostly the design of all the levels and graphics that took some time. They were a pretty organised bunch at Hewson Consultants and kept an eye on the project throughout development, so there were no surprises or big changes required at the end."



» [ZX Spectrum] *Exolon*'s impressive explosions are best shown off when you bring down a laser beam barrier.



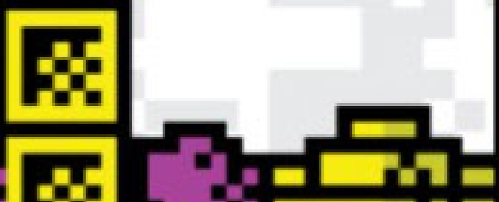
» [ZX Spectrum] In its last few zones, *Exolon* bombards you, making the game a tough one to complete.

Raffaele recalls *Exolon's* triumphant critical reception vindicating his freelance status, his excellent Amstrad port being easy to deliver and Nick Jones's C64 version borrowing his graphics. "It was great seeing all the positive reviews, and it was especially satisfying because it was an original freelance project, which made it uniquely personal as opposed to creating something in-house. The Amstrad conversion was dead simple. It only took a couple of days. It was simply a case of redrawing all the graphics [in] lower resolution [with] more colours, rewriting the sprite routines and slotting in the sound effects. Other than that, the code-base was identical. Nick did a brilliant job with the C64 version – he lived close to me, but I just left him to it… It used the Amstrad background graphics but the Spectrum sprites. Of course, he had to write all the code from scratch in 6502 assembly language."

Although Raffaele played no part in the development of the later Amiga and ST *Exolon* ports, having moved onto other projects, he was impressed by their visuals. "I remember thinking how nice all the new graphics looked – certainly not my work as my talents were maxed-out at eight colours!"

Asked if he would change anything about *Exolon* with hindsight and about the continued high regard for his 8-bit classic, Raffaele offers a few tweaks and a modest, heartfelt appraisal of his game's reputation. "Aside from maybe another couple of gameplay elements and another level or so, I don't think I would add that much more. A more interesting end sequence apart from 'congratulations' might have been appreciated. It's flattering that people still remember *Exolon* with such fond memories. The continued interest in the game does surprise me, though, what with all the bells and whistles on even the simplest modern games. There's a lot of nostalgia for the fun, less stressful times of our youth I suppose; I'm pleased that I contributed to that for some people, even in a small way." *

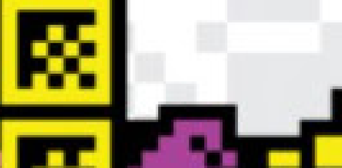
Many thanks to Raffaele Cecco for his valuable time and fascinating answers.

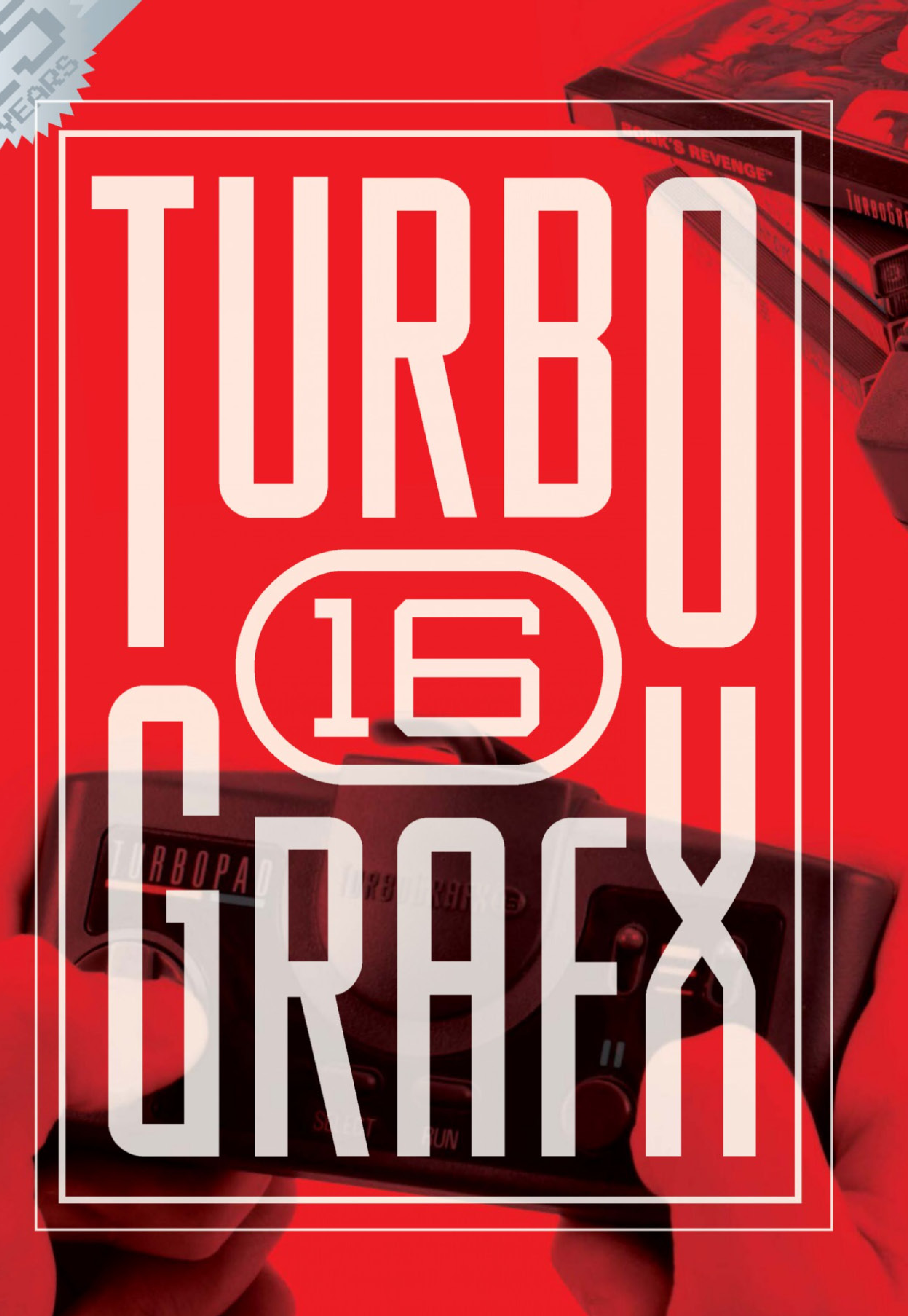













NEC 25 YEARS
TURBO 16 GRAFX
BONK'S REVENGE
TURBOGRAFX
TURBOPAD
TURBOGRAFX
SELECT
RUN



Redesigned and renamed, NEC's TurboGrafx-16 failed to capture the market the way its Japanese sibling, the PC Engine, had. On its 25th anniversary Kieren Hawken discovers why

We won't go into the history of the Japanese machine or even go on about how great it is, because you have read that all before. But what you need to know is that the PC Engine was first released to Japanese customers in October 1987 and it quickly took the market by storm. Designed by Hudson Soft and manufactured and marketed by electronics giant NEC, it went straight into a head-on battle with the mighty Nintendo Famicom. While the PC Engine (PCE) also featured a 6502-based 8-bit CPU, like Nintendo's machine, its custom 16-bit graphics hardware and highly adaptable six-channel sound chip raised it well above its competition. One of the console's key features was its size: with dimensions of 14x14x3.8cm, the PC Engine once held the record for the world's smallest game console. And its games came on equally minute HuCards, not unlike the Sega Cards that had previously been seen on the SG-1000 and Master System consoles. The PC Engine's almost instant success saw a huge amount of publishers supporting the machine; companies such as Capcom, Konami, Taito, Namco and Data East all produced third-party games for the system. The PCE also became the first console to take advantage of the burgeoning CD-ROM format when the Super CD-ROM² add-on was released just over a year after the console's launch in December 1988. Japanese sales soared to over seven million and the system wasn't discontinued until well into 1994, while new commercial titles were released for the PCE up until 1999!

But what of the Western market? With the PC Engine's success in the Land of the Rising Sun, it only seemed natural that North American and European releases would follow. In August 1989, nearly two years after the Japanese launch, the console would finally be introduced to North American audiences as the NEC TurboGrafx-16. This moniker was chosen to promote the console's superb 16-bit graphics, the key feature that put it above the market-dominating Nintendo Entertainment System. However, the name was not the only new thing about it: the system had also been heavily redesigned and grown greatly in size. Test markets had shown that the American market lived by the phrase 'bigger is better'. They had big cars, big meals and big houses, so naturally NEC thought that US consumers wanted a big console. The new dimensions were 36x30.8x8.2cm, over twice the size of the original machine. It also featured a sleek black casing, to better match the televisions of the time. NEC opted to bundle the system with the game *Keith Courage In Alpha Zones*, a strange choice given that it was based on an unfamiliar ▶



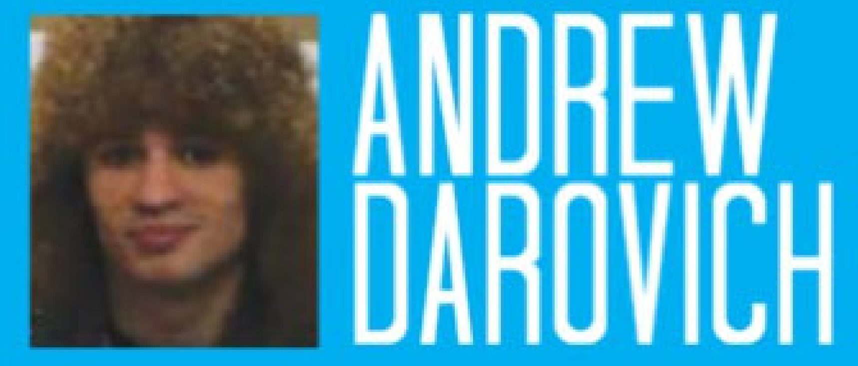
» One interesting aspect of the TurboGrafx is that the on switch locks the current game into place. Just like on the Game Boy.

» Sadly the TurboGrafx isn't RGB compatible, meaning you'll need to mod it in order to get the sharpest picture.

Japanese anime series. The first test markets took place in Los Angeles and New York where the machine was positioned as a rival to the NES, with advertising and promotional activity all geared towards taking a slice out of Nintendo's market share. These ads all touted the console's superiority over the NES and showed gamers the impressive graphical and audio abilities of NEC's console. But this competition was short-lived as at almost exactly the same time Sega was also test-marketing a console of its own, the fully 16-bit Genesis. Sega was well aware of its rivals and the Genesis launch was accompanied by an ad campaign mocking NEC's claim that the TurboGrafx-16 was the first 16-bit console.

NEC had seen trouble ahead, with Sega's machine gaining all the momentum in both the highly lucrative North American and European markets. Fortunately it had a few aces up its sleeve that would hopefully stem the tide and turn things back in its favour. The first of these was the release of the Super CD-ROM² add-on on American shores. It would be launched at the eye-watering price of $399.99 with launch games including *Fighting Street* (a conversion of the original *Street Fighter* coin-op), *Ys Book I & II* and *Monster Lair*. There were also plans afoot to release an all-in-one version of the console, as well as a handheld version of the machine. The Turbo Duo would become the first console to feature an integrated CD-ROM drive and would also play all your HuCard games. The Turbo Express would be the name of the handheld edition, which, like the Turbo Duo, was almost identical in design to the Japanese model. A beautifully designed – but amazingly battery-thirsty – portable, it would feature a 2.6-inch backlit LCD screen and optional TurboVision add-on that could be used to pick up all your favourite TV channels. With an expensive launch price of $249.99 it would fail to challenge its handheld rivals, which included the Sega Game Gear and Atari Lynx as well as Nintendo's all-conquering Game Boy. An interesting feature of the handheld was the TurboLink cable that allowed you to connect two machines together for multiplayer action. NEC even released several games that were designed with this feature in mind. The flight simulator game *Falcon* included a head-to-head dogfight mode that could only be accessed via TurboLink. By March 1991, NEC announced that it had sold 750,000 TG-16 consoles in the US, well below its own expectations.

Meanwhile European gamers, who were already familiar with the PC Engine thanks to mail-order import shops and magazines such as *C&VG*, were eagerly awaiting the European launch of the console. NEC had actually taken out paid adverts in magazines encouraging consumers not to buy these modded grey-market import machines and instead asked people to wait for an official release. NEC had intended to follow the 1989 North American release of the



ANDREW DAROVICH

Aetherbyte's lead programmer discusses its TurboGrafx and PCE homebrew games

Can you tell us more about the decision to produce a new HuCard?
Because it's fun, and we discovered that only the really hardcore fans have functional CD hardware. Designing the board itself and getting that to work was actually very simple. The hard part was getting it to look somewhat like a real card…. We had a lot of experimenting with plastic to get something that covered the board *and* the ROM, and was functional… The 3D printing of the cards, now that the case-tray and card-shell are designed, is pretty straightforward. It's mostly just time-consuming. They're also hand-assembled, including the surface-mount ROM; that stuff is tedious.

What games have you made so far and what is coming in the future?
We've got *Insanity, Pyramid Plunder, Reflectron, Atlantean, Inferno* (MSX game) and I am currently working on *Grelox*, an action adventure for PC, with Sunteam Paul.

How difficult was it to make a game for the system?
The TurboGrafx was never an open platform like a home computer, so everything we have is the result of reverse engineering and experimenting. It's painful sometimes, mostly because the tools aren't all there. We wrote our own chiptune tools and graphics conversion tools. Without these, we'd have nothing done!

What do you think are the console's strengths and weaknesses?
Its strong points are definitely the sprites and the sound. I love the sound chip in the machine, I don't think anything compares to it. The stereo panning is excellent, and the types of instruments you can make end up creating really unique soundtracks that fit the games perfectly. The sprites are very straightforward to work with and are also far more colourful than the other machines of the time.

To me, the weakest points are only having one background layer. This makes really fancy-looking background effects a bit tricky to execute.



> "HE SUMMONED SAID CONTRACTOR AND, IN FRONT OF ME, IN A SMALL ROOM, STARTING SLAPPING HIM WHILE CALLING HIM NAMES"
> Loriciel's Pascal Jarry recalls a bizarre meeting



» While the TurboGrafx does look nice, it's nowhere near as gorgeous as the original PC Engine. A poor design decision.

» *Turbo Play* was one of several magazines produced to support the TurboGrafx.

» [TurboGrafx-16] Sega had Sonic, Nintendo had Mario, and NEC had Bonk! He might not be as identifiable but the games are very good.

TurboGrafx with a 1990 European one. Dropping the '16' part of the name that Sega had openly mocked, the machine would also change in colour from black to grey. NEC intended to release the TurboGrafx in the UK, Germany and France initially, with other markets following. Consoles were produced, games with multi-language boxes were made up and everything was ready to ship. The European iteration would be bundled with *Blazing Lazers* (aka *Gunhed*) and would be fully compatible with the North American model, but not the Japanese one (same as with the TG-16). Magazines of the time were eagerly anticipating the launch of the console but were also dubious about whether it would be able to compete with the Sega Mega Drive, or the recently announced Super Nintendo that was also on its way to European shores.

NEC had also begun to court European software houses in order to get them to produce games for the TurboGrafx. The company felt that the machine needed more 'Western styled games' and opted to produce new games rather than translate more of the Japanese titles. One of the first companies NEC turned to was Loriciel, a prolific French publisher and developer best known for titles such as *Skweek*, *André Panza Kickboxing* and *Jim Power*. Pascal Jarry was the development manager at Loriciel and was asked to evaluate NEC's console on the company's behalf. "I had created the original version of *Panza Kickboxing* and Loriciel had just signed a deal with NEC to adapt the game to their machine," he ▶

EAST VS WEST

The TurboGrafx-16 was not the only machine to look different to its Japanese counterpart. Here are some other notable examples…

NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM / FAMICOM

■ The Nintendo Famicom underwent a major redesign to become the NES. Not only did Nintendo change the name and give it a new case, it also changed the format of the cartridges and the way you inserted them. The NES is also much larger than the Japanese machine.

ATARI 2600 / 2800

■ Of the very few Western machines redesigned for the Eastern market, the Atari 2600 is the most notable example. Rebranded as the 2800, gone was the iconic wood grain and its place was a sleek plastic case that featured four controller ports. The design would later be reused for the 7800 ProSystem.

SEGA MASTER SYSTEM / MARK III

■ The Master System started off life as the Sega Mark III in the Land of the Rising Sun. Its long white case and controllers were highly reminiscent of its predecessor, the SG-1000. The machine was redesigned for the Western market before the Master System design was adopted for its country of origin.

PHILIPS / SONY CD-i

■ It's well known that Philips and Sony co-created the CD-i multimedia format. But did you know that Sony released its own versions of the CD-i in Japan? As well as translating many of the US and European releases, Sony produced original CD-i software for its home market.

SUPER NINTENDO / SUPER FAMICOM

■ Affectionately known as the SNES, this console is unique in that it was redesigned for the North American market and then changed back to its original Japanese design for European consumers. It likely has something to do with the ugly purple and white look of the North American machine that received a lot of criticism.



» TurboGrafx games are region-locked, meaning you'll need an adaptor in order to play PC Engine games.

▶ remembers. "I had evaluated the TurboGrafx but I had no personal interest in programming it, sorry to say. At the same time we had so much going on in Europe. I was mainly programming original games and managing teams." But it wasn't all negative news, as he goes on to explain: "On the other hand, I was very excited by Japan and I had learned the language during three intensive years. I was able to speak and write, good enough to work over there anyway, so I was in charge of overseeing various Japan-related stuff such as all the PC Engine adaptations we were doing like *Baby Joe*, *Davis Cup Tennis* and *Skweek* etc."

It was an enjoyable time for Pascal. "For each new TurboGrafx master I was flying over to Japan for the final tests, as we did not have the material in France, he recalls. "That was very exciting." The smile soon turns to laughter as Pascal remembers one particular series of events. "When the Japanese distributor wanted *Panza* to be adapted for the TG, I proposed to do it in six months but it was too long for them. They found another developer in Japan who proposed five. I wished them luck when they started and the Japanese distributor was saying that 'Japanese programmers

> **"I HAD ALL THE MUSIC WRITTEN AND IN THE GAME. THEN WE ALL WENT OUT AND GOT DRUNK… AS YOU DID!"**
> Barry Leitch enjoyed working on Impossamole

are better'. Fair enough I thought. Problem was when, seven months later, the game was not finished. The big boss was upset and his pride was hurt. He summoned said contractor and, in front of me, in a small room, starting slapping him while calling him names, very clearly so I could understand! It was like 'you said six months and you were right Pascal. This moron said five months and he is a moron (slap the back of the head). He really is a stupid arrogant failure (slap) and I should have believed you'. It was pretty weird, I can tell you!"

As well as Loriciel in France, NEC had signed up the well-regarded Gremlin Graphics in England to its cause. Alex Davis was a lead programmer at Gremlin at the time and was quickly thrown in at the deep end. "Gremlin were expanding onto console, and NEC were looking for Western developers to create games for the European and US markets," he explains. "The original plan was for us to develop TurboGrafx versions of *Venus The Flytrap* and *Switchblade II*, but Monty Mole made more sense from a marketing point of view as he was a much more identifiable character, so my first project was a conversion of *Impossamole*." He was quick to expand on the challenges he faced. "A large cartridge emulator (about the size of a desktop PC) was plugged into a regular retail TurboGrafx. NEC supplied an assembler, linker and fairly basic command-line debugger. While the tools were adequate, Western dev tools were far superior to Japanese ones. The TG tools were a bit of a culture shock at first, but usable. It also meant I got my first 386 PC, which positively ripped along at 33MHz."

Alex also remembers facing several obstacles when it came to the sound. "As was often the case back then, audio was very much an afterthought and left until very late in development," he recalls. "We had some audio tools that DMA Design had developed, but they needed a colour monitor and our manager wouldn't get us one until we needed the tools. We only got one when Barry Leitch came in from Imagitec Design. At which point we found that the 'full audio system' we had been told we had was just a waveform editor and nothing else. This resulted in us having to write a complete audio driver from scratch in a day. Funny? Not at the time."

Retro Gamer managed to contact Barry himself, who recounted the following story to us. "Gremlin had decided to convert *Impossamole* to the TurboGrafx and needed the music converted to it. We didn't have a dev kit at Imagitec and nobody knew if there was a music driver that came with it or not. So they sent me down to Gremlin for five days to work with the

TEN TURBO EXCLUSIVES



DAVIS CUP TENNIS
LORICIEL

■ A conversion of the popular home computer game of the same name, *Davis Cup* is unique in that it always uses a split-screen viewpoint with a window for each player. It also allows up to four players via the Turbo Tap adaptor, making it a great game to play with friends.

FALCON
SPECTRUM HOLOBYTE

■ Along with Accolade's *Gunboat*, this is one of two 3D simulations released for the machine. The TG version compares quite favourably with its 16-bit computer counterparts. The polygon graphics are a very impressive achievement indeed, but it is a little hampered by the controls.



IMPOSSAMOLE
GREMLIN GRAPHICS

■ The very last entry in Gremlin's popular Monty Mole franchise, *Impossamole* is much more of a standard 'Mario style' platformer than previous games in the series. Monty now takes the form of a beefed-up superhero who must use his powers to stop an alien invasion.



TURRICAN
ACCOLADE

■ Manfred Trenz's *Turrican* was a huge hit on the home computers and soon made its way to several consoles, too, the TurboGrafx being one of them. This version of the game holds up really well and features nice colourful graphics along with some excellent music.



ANDRÉ PANZA KICKBOXING
LORICIEL

■ Another conversion from 16-bit home computers, this excellent one-on-one fighting game features over 50 different moves! You must train your fighter, spar and then work your way up to a final confrontation with the legendary André Panza himself.



FAILED EUROPEAN LAUNCH

Peter Mortimer explains why the TurboGrafx failed in the UK

The poor sales of the TurboGrafx in North America had left NEC with a tough decision to make: take a chance and release its console in Europe as planned, or abandon the launch and cut its losses. The firm eventually opted to simply sell all its inventory to several European distributors and pull out of Western markets altogether. UK console specialist Telegames picked up all the stock planned for the UK, as the owner of the company Pete Mortimer explains. "NEC had decided not to release the TurboGrafx in the UK for various reasons and we managed to buy several containers of hardware and software from them. We then distributed this system in the UK via mail order. However, as it would no longer be manufactured, the supply of stock and lack of new games soon made it difficult to support as it was only ever sold in limited numbers." New machines can still be picked up online, mainly from German distributors, and it's an attractive proposition due to its native RGB output. A converter can easily be picked up that allows you to play Japanese games on the console.

programmers and get it all done. We sat down on the Monday and planned out our week. I explained the data format we used on all the other drivers, instrument parameters and arpeggios, things like that we could use to make the music sound better. They pored over the manual reading what the hardware was actually capable of. By Thursday they had the music driver done, they were very talented programmers, and I had all the music written and in the game, then we all went out and got drunk… as you did!"

Due to the machine's failure to capture the North American market and the huge presence of its rivals Sega and Nintendo, NEC cancelled the launch of the TurboGrafx in Europe (see boxout) at the very last minute. NEC also decided to give up on the console in North America and in 1991 it handed over control of the TurboGrafx-16 to Turbo Technologies, Inc (TTI). The new company did its best with the machine and continued to release games up until 1993, when the machine was finally discontinued in North America. All remaining stock was turned over to TurboZone Direct, a small company that continued to sell the console and games via mail order for a few more years. Eventual sales in North America hit 2.5 million, a figure that paled in comparison when compared to its rivals. Given the machine's impact in Japan, you can't help but wonder what went wrong, so we asked a few people involved with the machine what they thought.

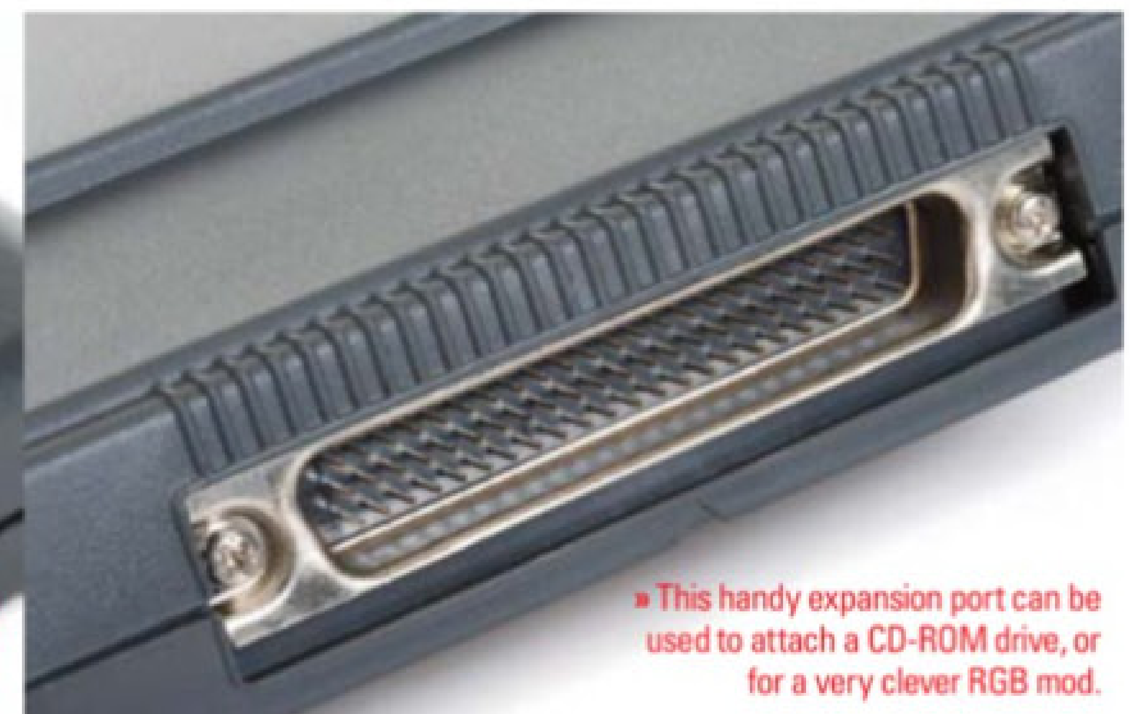
Paul Weller, who runs the PC Engine Gamer website and publishes the same-named magazine, has some interesting thoughts on NEC's problems. "They should have fired the marketing department for starters," he begins. "One of the most appealing things for me about the PC Engine was the uniquely Japaneseness about it, which lent it an air of foreign mystery. But in the US they did their best to strip away all the cultural references, [particularly on] the covers. There was literally nothing appealing about those games if you saw them sitting on a shop shelf." Pascal believes it was doomed from day one: "I don't believe the TurboGrafx had a chance. It didn't have a killer app (from a European point of view). It's not about pushing the hardware, it's about getting the proper games for a European audience. You need to be an arcade game fan to play PC Engine or a Japan lover. This is not mass market in Europe."

NEC's console may have suffered from poor marketing and a lack of support, but there's no denying that it has a rich selection of games, particularly for those who loved arcade conversions. Who knows what might have happened if it had enjoyed the same success it had first received in Japan? *

Special thanks to: Paul Weller, Andrew Darovich, Alex Davis, Pete Mortimer, Barry Leitch and Pascal Jarry.



» Later joypads featured additional buttons, making games like *Street Fighter II* much easier to play.


» This handy expansion port can be used to attach a CD-ROM drive, or for a very clever RGB mod.

Although the TurboGrafx-16 started off as a Japanese machine, there were actually a number of games that were developed in the US and Europe that never made it to the PC Engine. Here are ten of the best…



YO BRO
ICOM

This interesting and quirky title is also exclusive to the system and was clearly produced with the American public in mind. You play as a cool skateboarding dude who must stop an alien invasion using his handy catapult. The game also uses a fairly unique isometric-style view.



TALESPIN
RADIANCE SOFTWARE

Based on the popular Disney cartoon series of the same name, TG *TaleSpin* is different to the Nintendo and Sega versions of the game. In this attractive-looking platformer you play as Baloo, making his way around the various themed levels, chucking stuff at the bad guys.



ORDER OF THE GRIFFON
STRATEGIC SIMULATIONS INC

Any fans of *Eye Of The Beholder* should definitely seek out and play this excellent Dungeons & Dragons-based RPG from SSI. The game is set in the nation of Karameikos within D&D's Mystara setting and uses the Basic Dungeons & Dragons rules instead of the AD&D ones.



BATTLE ROYALE
INCREDIBLE TECHNOLOGIES

In the late Eighties and early Nineties, wrestling was huge in North America so it's only natural that a grappling game would make its way to the TurboGrafx. It might not feature any real WWE superstars, but many of the characters here will certainly feel very familiar.



DARKWING DUCK
RADIANCE SOFTWARE

Based on the cartoon series, *Darkwing Duck* was one of the last games released in North America for the TurboGrafx after Turbo Technologies took over the machine. It's pretty standard platforming fare with some nice cartoon-quality graphics and whimsical music.

Adventure Soft UK

Go West: Mike Woodroffe strikes a deal to convert American text adventures to British computers. Go East: He commissions his own titles under the banner Adventuresoft UK. David Crookes examines their history



» [ZX Spectrum] Love or hate her, Tynesoft's *Super Gran* followed the familiar Adventure International UK format.



» [ZX Spectrum] The usual North, South, East, West took on a new dimension in *Spider-Man*: "I'm on the ceiling."

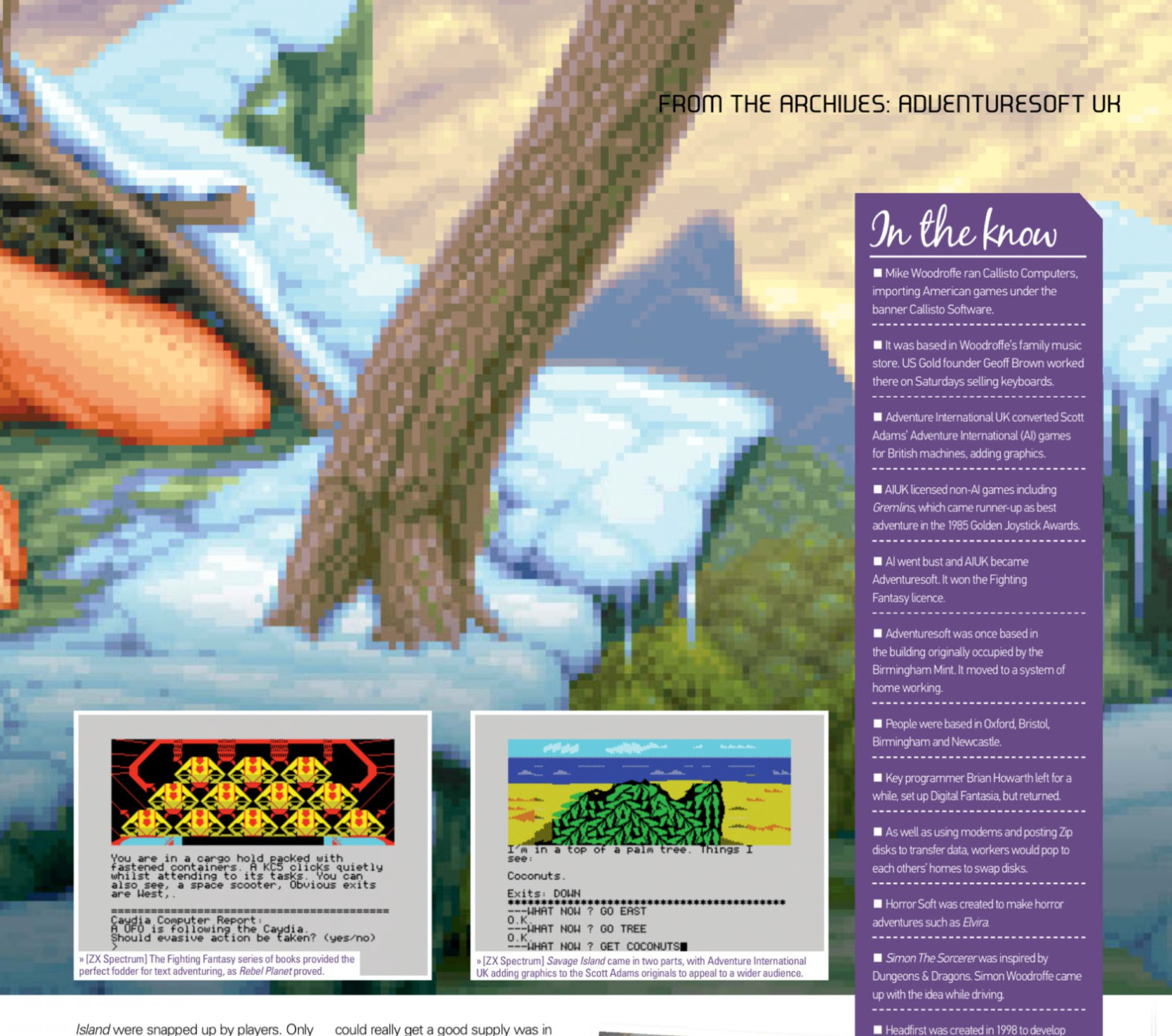
There is a series of shorts on YouTube called Kids React, in which children are shown technology products of yesteryear and are asked to interact with them. The producers film the kids' reactions while their faces contort with confusion as they stab their fingers into the holes of a phone's rotary dial or fumble around trying to work out where chunky cartridges go in retro consoles.

If we were to tell such children that Scott Adams's game *Adventureland* caused a sensation when it was released in 1978, their brains would likely explode. They'd be amazed by the first adventure game to be playable on a home computer, particularly because it threw players into an imaginative fantasy world and asked for it to be navigated by typing two-word, verb-noun phrases.

As readers of **Retro Gamer** know, that is the nature of what has come to be known as interactive fiction and Scott – back then a 26-year-old fledgling BASIC programmer born in Miami, Florida – was an early master. Inspired by Will Crowther's *Colossal Cave*, written a couple of years earlier on a PDP-10 mainframe machine, *Adventureland* was a major success. Scott came to be seen as one of the earliest founding figures of the entire computer gaming industry.

Indeed, Scott was on a roll as the Seventies turned into the Eighties, his brand of simple descriptions, first-person storytelling, creative worlds, clipped commands and a reasonable vocabulary of 120 words making for rather playable non-graphical games. He sold them under the brand Adventure International, placing adverts in computer magazines such as *Byte* and fulfilling the orders himself. He also coined a catchphrase of sorts. 'What should I do?' his games would scream.

The firm's name was something of a misnomer, however. It wasn't quite global. While Scott was effectively a developer and self-publisher and there was potential to sell his games around the world, they were being ported to machines such as the Atari 8-bit series, Apple II and Commodore PET, which were distinctly more popular in the US. At the same time, he was writing titles that were proving to be highly sought after. One after another, the likes of *Pirate Adventure*, *Secret Mission*, *Voodoo Castle*, *The Count*, *Strange Odyssey*, *Mystery Fun House*, *Pyramid Of Doom*, *Ghost Town* and *Savage*



» [ZX Spectrum] The Fighting Fantasy series of books provided the perfect fodder for text adventuring, as *Rebel Planet* proved.

» [ZX Spectrum] *Savage Island* came in two parts, with Adventure International UK adding graphics to the Scott Adams originals to appeal to a wider audience.

In the know

- Mike Woodroffe ran Callisto Computers, importing American games under the banner Callisto Software.
- It was based in Woodroffe's family music store. US Gold founder Geoff Brown worked there on Saturdays selling keyboards.
- Adventure International UK converted Scott Adams' Adventure International (AI) games for British machines, adding graphics.
- AIUK licensed non-AI games including *Gremlins*, which came runner-up as best adventure in the 1985 Golden Joystick Awards.
- AI went bust and AIUK became Adventuresoft. It won the Fighting Fantasy licence.
- Adventuresoft was once based in the building originally occupied by the Birmingham Mint. It moved to a system of home working.
- People were based in Oxford, Bristol, Birmingham and Newcastle.
- Key programmer Brian Howarth left for a while, set up Digital Fantasia, but returned.
- As well as using modems and posting Zip disks to transfer data, workers would pop to each others' homes to swap disks.
- Horror Soft was created to make horror adventures such as *Elvira*.
- *Simon The Sorcerer* was inspired by Dungeons & Dragons. Simon Woodroffe came up with the idea while driving.
- Headfirst was created in 1998 to develop Adventure Soft Publishing's new games.

Island were snapped up by players. Only they were not getting the international airing Scott's talents deserved.

In the UK, the text adventure scene was also growing, boosted by the lack of processing power and memory of the early computers. Among those enjoying having his imagination pricked by words alone was Mike Woodroffe, who owned a popular shop in Birmingham called Callisto Computers, one of Britain's very first. It was based within his family's music store, but Mike had started to see the money-making potential of gaming and realised there was a wealth of top-quality games being produced in America that were ripe for import.

"The computer shop was the catalyst really," Mike explains. "Although we were selling Apple IIes, we found that there was a very big demand for software, but the only place we could really get a good supply was in America. We started to import games from companies like Instant Software under a brand called Callisto Software. One of the firms we approached was Adventure International. I had a good talk with Scott and we struck a deal."

The initial deal was to simply import Scott's games. Mike figured that it would be cheaper and more effective to manufacture the games in the UK than have bulky boxes shipped across the Atlantic. But merely importing Scott's titles was failing to capitalise on a growing home computer market in the UK: Scott's games had not been ported to the ZX Spectrum, Dragon 32 or BBC Micro and it was leaving a gaping hole.

A computer gaming magazine raised concerns about this in an interview with Mike, who admitted he did not have anyone to work on these ▶

» A grainy photo but one which shows Scott Adams (he of the big hair and glasses) assembled with some well-known Marvel characters to promote Adventure International's tie-up.



Timeline

1978 SCOTT ADAMS RELEASES TEXT ADVENTURE ADVENTURELAND VIA HIS NEW COMPANY ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL (AI).

1983 ADVENTURE INTERNATIONAL UK (AI UK) FORMS TO IMPORT SCOTT'S TITLES TO BRITAIN.

1983 THE COMPANY ALSO CONVERTS SCOTT'S GAMES TO BRITISH MACHINES. ADVENTURELAND LAUNCHES ON THE ZX SPECTRUM AND BBC MICRO.

1984 MIKE WOODROFFE SECURES LICENCE TO PRODUCE FILM AND TV-BASED TEXT ADVENTURES.

1984 SCOTT SECURES THE DIGITAL RIGHTS TO PRODUCE GAMES BASED ON MARVEL CHARACTERS. RELEASES SPIDER-MAN AND THE HULK.

1985 GREMLINS AND ROBIN OF SHERWOOD ARE RELEASED, PROGRAMMED BY BRIAN HOWARTH.

1986 AI RUNS INTO TROUBLE AND FOLDS. AI UK BECOMES ADVENTURESOFT. TIES UP A GAME CONVERSION DEAL FOR THE FIGHTING FANTASY BOOKS.

1988 ADVENTURESOFT WORKS FOR US GOLD TO DEVELOP HEROES OF THE LANCE.

1990 ELVIRA IS RELEASED. ELVIRA II FOLLOWS A YEAR LATER.

1993 SIMON THE SORCERER IS RELEASED AS PART OF A NEW COMPANY CALLED ADVENTURE SOFT PUBLISHING.

1995 SIMON THE SORCERER II IS RELEASED. THE FEEBLE FILES FOLLOWS IN 1997.

1998 HEADFIRST PRODUCTIONS IS CREATED TO MAKE THE THIRD SIMON THE SORCERER GAME.

2002 SIMON THE SORCERER 3D RELEASED.

2004 CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH RELEASED. FINANCIAL PROBLEMS HIT HEADFIRST AND IT CLOSES. SIMON THE SORCERER IP REMAINS WITH ADVENTURE SOFT PUBLISHING AND COMPANY GOES ON TO PORT THE GAME TO SMARTPHONES AND TABLETS.

2014 PLANS REVEALED FOR A NEW GAME.

▶ conversions. Mike's words were spotted by a budding programmer called Brian Howarth. Having already been inspired by Scott's work and motivated enough to write adventures of his own on the TRS-80, "I contacted Mike and offered my services," Brian says.

At this point, Brian was already making a name for himself. His first game had been *The Golden Baton* which, initially programmed in BASIC, then rewritten in machine code, had been published by Molimerx in 1981. It sold so well that Molimerx wanted to turn the game into a series called the Mysterious Adventures and Brian was pressured to create more. *The Time Machine* and *Arrow Of Death* parts one and two followed. As fate would have it, Brian was making use of a self-coded interpreter based upon Scott's *Adventureland* source code which had been published in *Byte* magazine. It put him in the perfect position to be able to convert Scott's games.

Mike welcomed Brian with open arms. "Meeting Mike was interesting," recalls Brian. "I had already met his brother Jezz, who had played keyboards with Black Sabbath, and I had bought a used electric piano from him." Mike formed a new company called Adventure International UK (AIUK).

Brian began work in AIUK's offices above Mike's computer shop. The interpreter would pull in data from Scott's existing databases and with the core reproduced, the rest would slot into place. "Brian was tasked with creating the engine [I had produced to make my games] on the UK systems," Scott says. "Once the engine was transferred over, the game databases would then run."

Brian's passion for the project was clear. "I had fun playing Scott Adams's games," says Brian. "I liked the 'split screen' format where descriptions were displayed in the top portion of the screen and the responses of the player and computers were displayed in the lower half, which scrolled without scrolling the top half." But the games being converted for a UK audience had one addition: graphics. Mike figured that pure text-based adventures would not provide the larger sales he was after and that the extra memory of the British machines should be used to the max. He hired talented artist Teoman Irmak.

> **"We scrapped a lot of the work we'd done and started again"**
> ANDREW BRAZIER ON WHY SIMON THE SORCERER 3D TOOK AGES TO DEVELOP

Suddenly Adventure International was a global player, split into two separate companies, one run by Scott and the other Mike. In 1984, Adventure International began to license games based on films and comics. It struck a deal with 20th Century Fox to create *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across The 8th Dimension*. It also partnered with Marvel Comics to deliver text-adventures based on The Hulk, Spider-Man, and Human Torch and The Thing in a series of three games under the banner Questprobe.

"I travelled to the UK to do a promotional tour," says Scott. "At a convention, Marvel supplied Hulk and Spider-Man actors for the promotion. When I was writing the plots for the comics to go along with the Marvel games, I was also asked for suggestions on how I wanted the chief villain Chief Examiner to look. I suggested they use me as a template."

But Mike noted that Scott, despite heading a 12-strong team, was unable to satiate a growing demand for adventure games. So AIUK began to produce its own titles, using the same system that had previously been utilised to port Scott's titles. Among those were Brian's Mysterious Adventures. But, like Adventure International, the UK arm sought to snap up licences, one of which was *Gremlins*, based on the classic Eighties movie.

"By working with a licence, we could open up the market and get journalists to talk to us," says Mike. "People wanted graphic adventures so we started to make approaches." The



» [Amiga] Was *Elvira* appealing to teenage boys? On this showing, most likely...

Gremlins tie-up came out of a meeting with a licensing company from America. Mike had travelled to London merely looking to put out some feelers, but he was shocked by the response.

"I came out with the *Gremlins* licence thinking 'how did I do that; what am I doing? I've got the *Gremlins* licence. This is insane,'" he recalls. "And at the same time the same people asked me, 'Do you fancy *Robin Of Sherwood*'? I said 'yes'! It was purely and simply because nobody else was looking for licensing and hadn't realised licences were good news. It changed soon enough when everybody cottoned on and then crazy money was involved. But at that stage, it was mind-boggling."

Gremlins: The Adventure was a winner. Teoman infused this tense game with great animation as Gremlins met sticky ends in microwaves and blenders. Brian had no issues with creating text adventures out of film franchises either, welcoming the chance to widen the audience of interactive fiction.

The team were on a roll and they fell into a workable system. Before Teoman looked at any project, the locations were already mapped out and the game elements put in place. "I'd be given a list with the names of the locations, for example 'castle gate' or 'outside tavern' and told of the moveable elements… This is all I had to go on," he says. But that was enough. Teoman worked on a number of games, from Golden Joystick award-winning *The Sorcerer of Claymorgue Castle* – "I also got to paint the cover art, in oils this time" – to *Robin Of Sherwood: The Touchstones Of Rhiannon* and the conversions of *Spider-Man, The Incredible Hulk* and *Fantastic Four* ("I took the Apple IIe graphics and completely redrew them using a predefined character set system").

Not that licensing was helping Scott particularly. For too long he had concentrated primarily on lower-end machines such as the Commodore VIC-20 and Texas Instruments TI-99/4A. Since they were perfectly capable of running undemanding adventure games and other companies were deserting the platforms, Scott was finding that he increasingly had the market to himself.

But it was a dwindling market. The royalties coming from AIUK were propping up Adventure International. In 1985, Adventure International went bankrupt. "If you think back, Scott Adams had the worldwide rights to all Marvel characters for all computer games, and he only produced three products and then he went bust," laments Mike. "Look how much money has been made out of a Marvel franchise over the last ten years…"

In 1986, with Adventure International gone (taking the licence for the UK name with it), Mike's company changed its name to Adventuresoft UK. ▶

Succeeding at time warp speed

In a bid to appeal to mainstream gamers, Adventure International UK/ Adventuresoft UK was unafraid of snapping up licences, which makes it rather ironic that its biggest hit, *Simon The Sorcerer*, was based on a fresh IP. To ensure gamers and journalists took greater notice of the game, though, the developer was canny enough to approach a cult name to voice the main character.

Actor Chris Barrie, a professional voice-actor and impressionist who was becoming well known for playing Arnold Rimmer in *Red Dwarf*, lent his voice to Simon. The choice was deliberate. "Simon was a sarcastic little bugger and Chris was the sarcastic actor," says Mike. Chris was replaced by Brian Bowles for the second game when his fees had risen to an unaffordable level, but by then the game had established itself. Not that the *Red Dwarf* connection ended. Simon Woodroffe designed *The Feeble Files* and invited Robert Llewellyn who played Kryten in the BBC 2 series to voice the lead character.

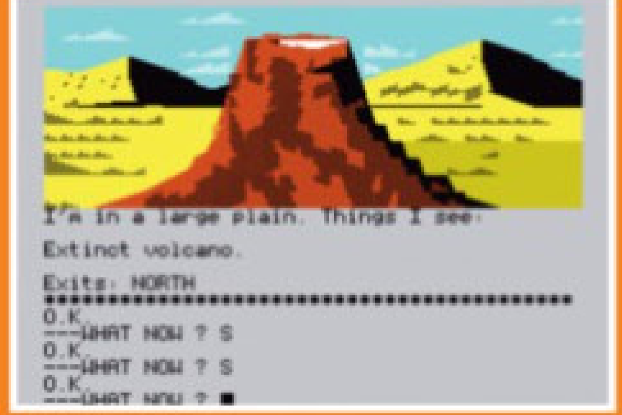


» [Amstrad CPC] *Robin Of Sherwood: The Touchstones of Rhiannon* was based on the popular TV series.



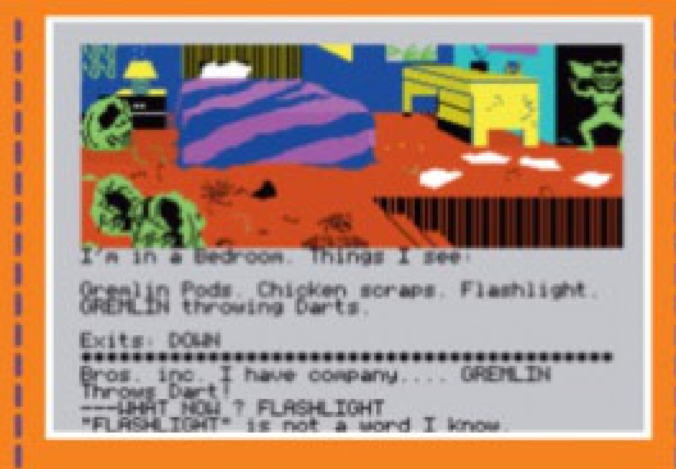
» [Amstrad CPC] *Gremlins* could be a violent game – rather surprising for a text-input adventure.

Defining games



Adventureland
(Various)

As the first text adventure for home computers, *Adventureland* marked the programming debut of Scott Adams. Originally created for the TRS-80, the graphic-less game relied on player imagination. It utilised a split screen with descriptions and other info at the top and commands entered at the bottom. When imported to Britain by Adventure International UK (AIUK) and converted to the ZX Spectrum in 1983, graphics were added. A BBC Micro version was also created in 1983 and a conversion for the Dragon 32/64 followed in 1985.



Gremlins: The Adventure (Various)

Gremlins blended a text adventure with graphical representations of scenes. But while *CRASH* magazine described it has having "the emptiness of a hollow beans tin when it comes to character interaction, supporting literature or innovative features", it remained a whole lot of fun. "I felt very comfortable in 'adventurising' the general plot of the movie and we never really hit any obstacles in coming up with the adaptation," says Brian. "Having graphics in the game was a neat opportunity to enhance and embellish the text descriptions."



Seas Of Blood
(Various)

One of the first Fighting Fantasy games released by Adventuresoft, *Seas Of Blood* was launched in 1985 for the Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad CPC. Casting the player as a blood-thirsty pirate looking for treasure, it was based on the book by Andrew Chapman. With 300 graphic locations and a definite challenge for map makers, it had the look and feel of a typical AIUK/Adventuresoft game, but that was to be expected. All of the company's earlier games were based on the same interpreter, but it didn't make them any less playable.



Elvira: Mistress Of The Dark (Various)

Launched by new firm Horror Soft, *Elvira* became famous for its cover art and series of magazine adverts. It was released in 1990 for the C64, Amiga, Atari ST and PC, bringing with it gorgeous visuals, spooky sounds and a gory gourmet of death. But, despite a huge landscape of dungeons, towers and gardens to explore, it was marred at times by constant disk access (and some swapping: it came on five floppies). Still, it was fully mouse-controlled, slick and involving, and it mixed up traditional exploring with some neat battles.



Simon The Sorcerer
(Various)

Released on the PC in 1993, this proved to be a watershed moment for Adventuresoft. Drawing on British humour and with a bratty 12-year-old as its hero, it entered a market already lapping up games by LucasArts and Revolution. In ripping up its own rule book and following the trend for SCUMM-esque titles, the game was influenced by the tales of JRR Tolkien and set in a fantastical village. It appeared at first glance to be a typical dungeons, dragons and goblins affair, but was actually a tongue-in-cheek, nod nod, wink wink, knowing parody.

Where Are They Now?



Mike Woodroffe

Mike continues to run Adventure Soft (adventuresoft.com) which still sells the *Simon The Sorcerer* games. He has plans for the future, too, with the company set to launch a Kickstarter project for a new adventure game.



Scott Adams

Scott worked as a senior programmer for AVISTA, a firm which develops software for use in the aerospace, defence, medical and manufacturing industries. In 2013 he released *The Inheritance*, a non-violent text adventure based on the Bible.



Brian Howarth

In 1990, Brian left for America in order to work for Cinemaware. In recent years, he has written software for various tablets and Apple's iPhone. Titles he's worked on include *Pottery Wheel*, *New Glass Harp* and *WriteLines*.

Simon Woodroffe

Simon moved from Adventure Soft to design games elsewhere. He was Sega's creative director on *Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed* and the lead designer on the 2009 game *Wheelman*. He is now creative director at Rare.

Alan Cox

Alan has become a well-known figure in the Linux scene. He was actively involved in developing the Linux kernel until 2013 and he worked for Linux distributor Red Hat in the Noughties. He has also been employed at Intel.



Teoman Irmak

As well as working on many games, Teoman created submarine simulation graphics for the Royal Navy. He became the art director at Artworld, producing the first fully computer-generated commercial comics.



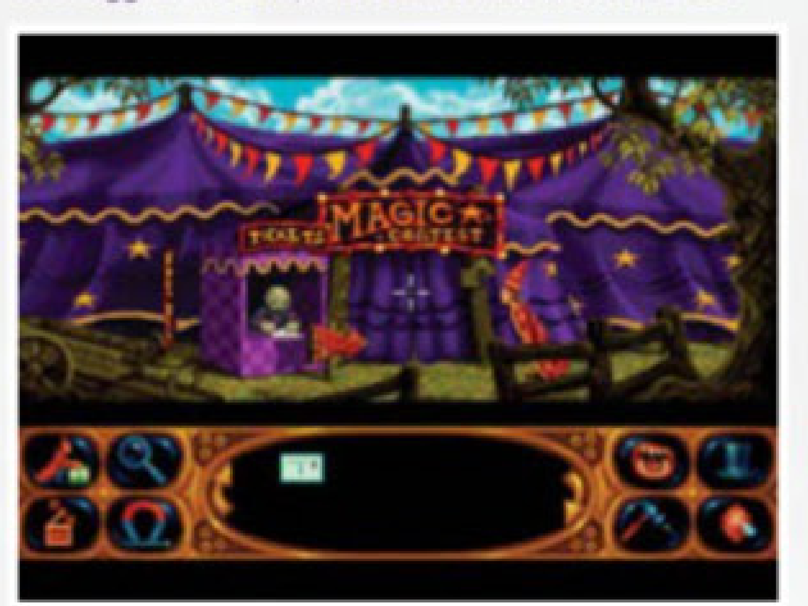
Andrew Brazier

Having gone on to become a game designer, Andrew moved into academia and he now manages the Level 3 Games Art course at Warwickshire College. He is also part of the indie development team GLPeas.



Ian Livingstone

A figurehead in the games industry, the former Life President of Eidos has been awarded an OBE and co-wrote the Livingstone-Hope report which recommended sweeping changes to UK games education in 2011.



» [PC] The CS Lewis-inspired *Simon The Sorcerer* sequel was tagged *The Lion, The Wizard And The Wardrobe*.



» [PC] *Simon The Sorcerer II* was full of knowing references to TV shows and comedians.

He met with Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone, the co-creators of the Fighting Fantasy game books, and struck a deal. The first Adventuresoft release became *Rebel Planet*, published by US Gold.

"It was a natural fit," says Mike. "The game was basically there. We just read the book, dissected it, then produced the story and turned that into an adventure, which at the end of the day wasn't that difficult because they were adventures anyway. We had to come up with a combat system, but that was already in the book."

Other Fighting Fantasy games followed and Ian Livingstone loved them. "I recall working with Mike on *Temple Of Terror*, which I thought was excellent for the time," he says. "But it was pretty much a straight port of the books plus some art. Not overly challenging for Mike's team who had quite a lot of experience. I've still got an unused copy of the game for the 48K Spectrum."

US Gold and Adventuresoft formed a flourishing relationship which led to the Adventuresoft team working on the acclaimed action-adventure side-scroller *Heroes Of The Lance* in 1988. But Adventuresoft also worked with other publishers including Tynesoft, for which it created *Terraquake*, a game coded by Graham Lilley featuring He-Man ("the whole project was completed in just over three weeks. No other project was able to repeat this feat," says Teoman) and *Super Gran*, another Brian Howarth special ("the franchises were all household names," he says).

There were non-franchised games – *Kayleth* was a notable, complex romp by Stefan Ufnowski, the creator of *Rebel Planet* – but Adventuresoft was changing direction. As the popularity of interactive fiction began to wane, point-and-click adventures such as *Maniac Mansion* gained a strong following. Mike created a new firm called Horror Soft, taking advantage of the power of the Amiga to produce multimedia extravaganzas such as *Personal Nightmare* in 1989 (with graphics from Teoman), *Elvira: Mistress Of The Dark* and *Elvira II: The Jaws Of Cerberus*.

Horror Soft became something of a family affair. Music was provided by Jezz Woodroffe. Mike's son, Simon Woodroffe designed *Waxworks* in 1992 and was credited as a designer on *Elvira* and *Elvira II*. Mike wanted to produce a third *Elvira* game, "but the designers wanted to do something different" and so the enthusiasm waned. Adventuresoft was remodelled as Adventure Soft Publishing.

Simon was handed the role of scripting a new point-and-click game called *Simon The Sorcerer*. Just 15 people worked on the game, most based from home but with eight artists working together in Newcastle, and it became the company's biggest success by far. Adventure Soft commissioned a new engine called the Adventure Graphic Operating System, or AGOS for short. It was written by Alan Cox and was based on an open source Multi-User Dungeon called AberMUD which Alan had created while he was at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth.

"The inspiration for *Simon The Sorcerer* was probably Dungeons & Dragons, magic and fairy stories," says Mike. "Simon came up with the concept of this lippy teenager who was involved in a magical world of fairy tales and stories and it just worked. For us, it was a natural progression. We wanted to do something better than before and we were driven by the hardware."



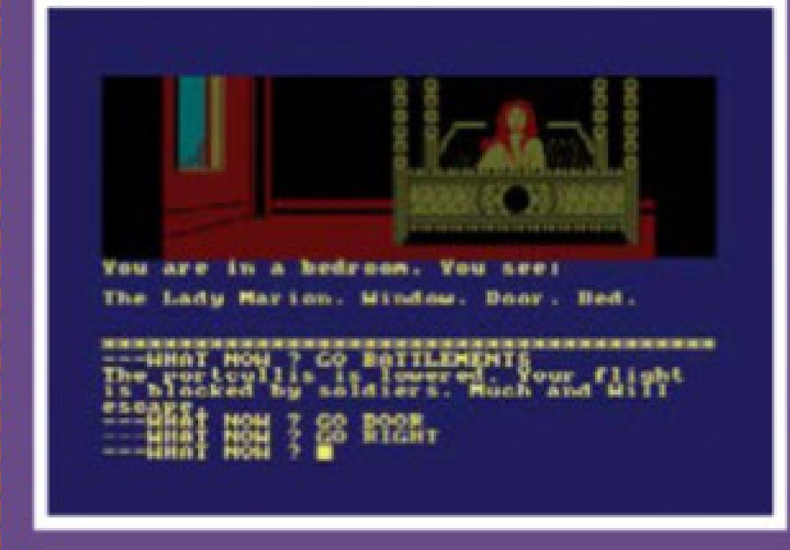
» [ZX Spectrum] Teoman Irmark's graphics really brought games to life, as this image from *Gremlins* shows.

THE DNA OF… Adventuresoft UK



Written word

Adventure games catered to a niche gaming market, but the players were passionate. There were even special sections in the main gaming mags devoted to such games. Scott Adams was the first to create text adventures on home computers.



Licences

To popularise text adventures, AIUK signed up big licences, producing titles based on *Gremlins*, *Robin Of Sherwood*, *Super Gran*, *He-Man* and more. Whether or not gamers knew that behind the glossy box art was a text-based game is another thing.



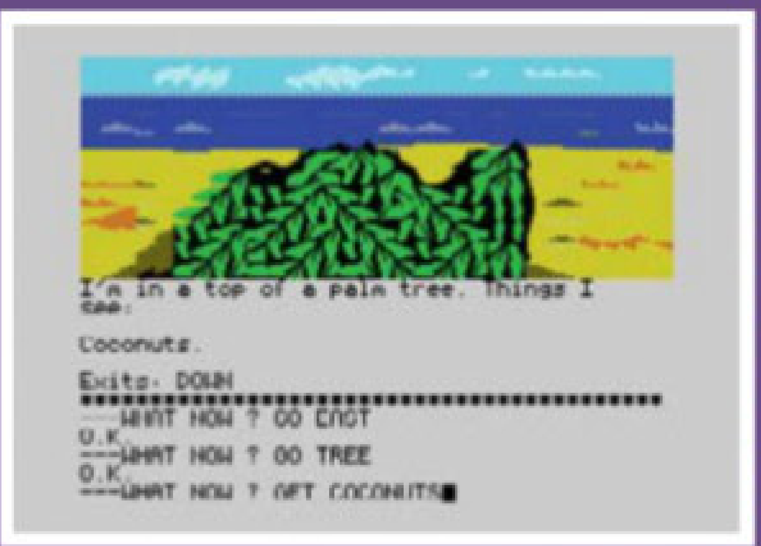
Fighting Fantasy

With Fighting Fantasy, AIUK instantly had a recognisable brand on its hands that could not have been more suited to the medium of text adventures. *Seas Of Blood*, *Rebel Planet* and *Temple Of Terror* fused graphics and text descriptions and brought the books to life.



Diversity

Adventuresoft was not afraid of widening its game range. It didn't always work out, though. A development firm set up by Mike – Headfirst Productions – created a survival horror game, *Call Of Cthulhu*, but money issues led to Headfirst's closure and many cancelled titles.



Graphics

While text adventures suited machines such as the TRS-80, later computers had much spare capacity. So when AIUK was converting Scott Adams's games, visuals were added. "If the machines would do graphics, people wanted graphics," says Mike Woodroffe.



Sense of Britishness

When AI went bust and its UK 'arm' became Adventuresoft, the resulting shift to producing new games in Britain was the true making of the company. *Simon The Sorcerer*, its biggest selling game, was infused with British quirkiness and people loved the game for it.



Point-and-clicks

By 1990, Mike figured that his firm had to produce something sexier. Cue *Elvira*, sold via new firm Horror Soft. But he also knew he had to move away from text adventures. The shift to point-and-click with *Simon The Sorcerer* was a shrewd – and lucrative – move.



Independence

Adventuresoft remains in a brilliant position to capitalise on its retro franchises. Aside from converting *Simon The Sorcerer* to mobile platforms, it allowed a German firm to make the (poor) fourth and fifth games of the series and it can always bring it out for a sixth outing.

Moving from text adventures to point-and-clicks was a costly venture, requiring a large spend on equipment. "We bought Silicon Graphics workstations and we eventually used Alias. It was a massive investment," says Mike. But more games followed. *Simon The Sorcerer II: The Lion, The Wizard And The Wardrobe* riffed on the book by CS Lewis. Simon Woodroffe's *The Feeble Files*, a sci-fi comedy about an alien was released in 1997.

But it was proving difficult to keep up. The new consoles – most notably the PlayStation – made development expensive, so a new strategy was needed. Aside from spinning *Simon The Sorcerer* into pinball and puzzles games, in 1998 Mike formed a new development company called Headfirst to run alongside Adventure Soft Publishing. Its first task was to produce a third *Simon* adventure.

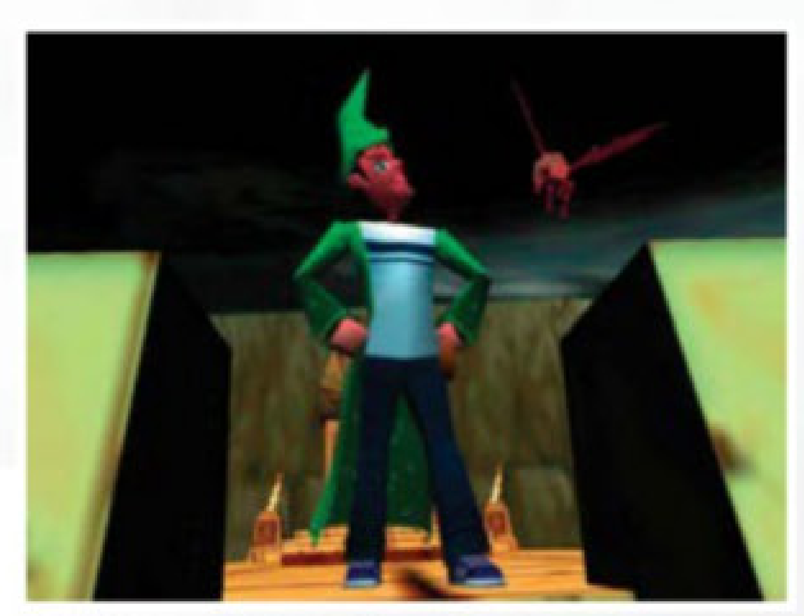
> **"I've still got an unused copy of Temple of Terror for the 48K Spectrum"** IAN LIVINGSTONE'S FIGHTING FANTASY BOOKS BECAME GAMES

"*Simon The Sorcerer 3* was a mammoth task and it took about five years to complete in all," says Andrew Brazier, who joined in 1996. "It originally started off as a 2D game, but 2D point-and-clicks were in their death throes and games publishers only wanted real-time 3D. We scrapped a lot of the work we'd done and started again." *Simon The Sorcerer 3D* was released in 2002 for the PC and it was criticised for its poor control system. Survival horror *Call Of Cthulhu: Dark Corners Of The Earth* followed in 2005 but, a year later, financial problems forced Headfirst into administration. Mike's decision to separate development from publishing was vindicated, though. Adventure Soft Publishing was unaffected by Headfirst's closure and it retained the *Simon The Sorcerer* intellectual property.

Since then, Adventure Soft Publishing has been concentrating on porting the *Simon The Sorcerer* series to Android and iOS, working with MojoTouch. It has also worked closely with Good Old Games, allowing the games to continue to be sold via download ("I don't know how many copies of the game have been sold now: a million; two or three million? I lost count several years ago," says Mike). But the adventure doesn't stop here. Mike strongly hints at a new adventure and points readers to Kickstarter. But any regrets? "Yes," he answers. "I regret that we didn't just do a third *Simon The Sorcerer* point-and-click adventure… I also regret licensing the character to the Germans for two games because they produced substandard products, but the next one – if there is a next one – will not be done the same. There will be direct involvement with us on the design and production of the product. And I can't wait." Neither can we. ✱



» [PC] Sci-fi adventure The Feeble Files had hi-res pre-rendered 3D graphics and a linear narrative.



» [PC] Released in 2002, *Simon The Sorcerer 3D* marked the franchise's move into the 21st century.



For his first course in the videogames industry, Jonathan Hurd cooked up the quirky Food Fight, a highly original and challenging title for Atari. Paul Drury takes a cream pie in the face



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
» **DEVELOPER:** GCC
» **RELEASED:** 1983
» **PLATFORM:** ARCADE
» **GENRE:** FOOD FLINGING

When you land your first job in the videogame business, you know you'll have to muck in around the office. Making tea, answering phones, running errands… applying lipstick?

"Yes, I helped put the touches on Ms Pac-Man's lips," laughs Jonathan Hurd. "It was my first day at GCC and the guys were feverishly trying to finish up the game. I asked if I could help and Mike Horowitz said, 'Yeah, her lips look a bit funny. Can you fix them?' So I tried a couple of things, a pixel here and a pixel there…"

Pac-Man's sweetheart left the building looking fabulous and Jonathan had made his first little contribution to the success of his new employer. He'd joined the firm just before Christmas 1981, leaving behind the software developer position he had held at a strategic consulting company since graduating from MIT, and became GCC's ninth employee. He already knew one of his bosses, Kevin Curran, having previously hired him as an intern at his last job, and Jonathan was delighted when he was given a very clear brief. "Kevin said, 'Design a videogame, we'll build it and we'll all get rich!'" Jonathan chuckles. "Making videogames for a guy in his early twenties who'd grown up with pinball… what could be better?"

Jonathan spent the holidays mulling over ideas for his entrée into the world of game design. He wanted to create something original, approachable and non-violent, so pondered what else a button on an arcade cabinet could do apart from 'fire'. As a lifelong baseball fan he settled on 'throw', but throw what? A childhood watching Three Stooges movies may have helped him come up with the answer. "Food!" exclaims Jonathan. "As soon as I had the idea for *Food Fight* I knew it was a great name and a great concept… and I knew I had to make it quickly before someone else did!"

So Jonathan arrived back at work on 4 January 1982 with a design

> "My boss said, design a videogame, we'll build it and we'll all get rich!"

Jonathan certainly made a meal of his first job at GCC







document ready to run past his bosses for approval. The game's premise was simple: cheeky chap Charley Chuck would begin each level on the right of the screen, determined to consume a tempting ice-cream cone situated on the left. Between him and his sweet treat were four maniacal chefs and numerous manholes to negotiate. The original idea was to have cream pies piled up on tables for Charley to chuck at his adversaries, but this added to on-screen clutter and required our hungry hero to keep returning to the tables to stock up on edible ammunition. Instead, piles of food would be strewn across the playfield, ready to be hurled at the angry cooks, who could retaliate in kind with well-aimed tomatoes, bananas and pies. Add in a strict time limit – the ice cream melts if you don't gobble it down within 30 seconds – and you have a delicious blend of *Robotron*'s pace and claustrophobia with a strategic element and sense of humour all of its own.

Much of the game's distinctive look comes from the memorable characters that stand between you and success. The four chefs, identified by their differing headwear, have their own personalities. Frenchman Jacques runs to a point slightly in front of you while Zorba, the Greek, heads to a position just behind you in a clever skewer manoeuvre. The American Oscar inconveniently positions himself between you and your ever-melting goal and Angelo the Italian, embodying the fiery Latin temperament, charges

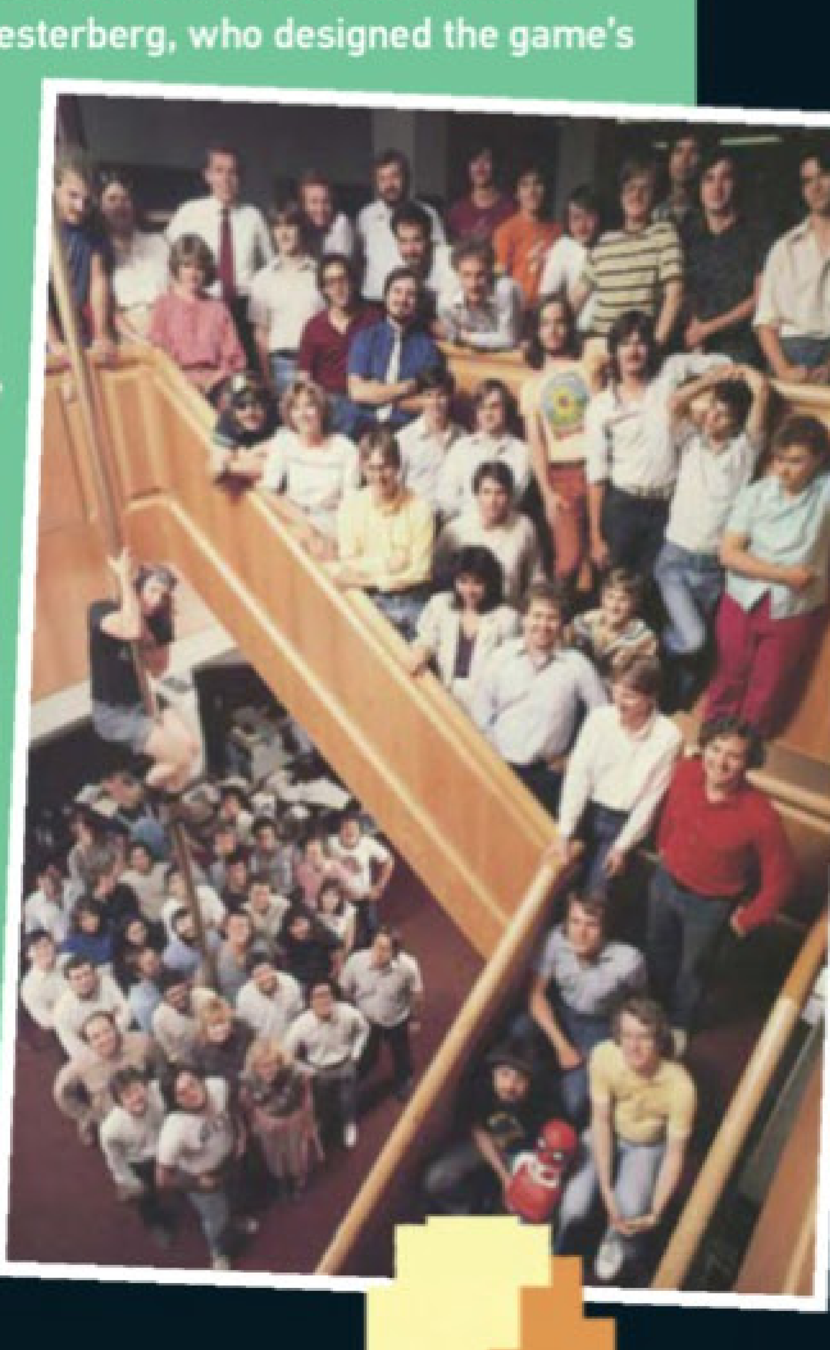


» [Arcade] Jonathan was inspired by old Laurel and Hardy and Three Stooges movies when coming up with the idea for his food-flinging debut.

FABULOUS FOOD FLINGERS

Proof that too many cooks don't always spoil the digital broth

Though *Food Fight* was very much made to Jonathan's recipe, he is quick to acknowledge all the other GCC team members who added ingredients and many of the key contributors were credited within the high score table. TW is Tom Westerberg, who designed the game's ground-breaking hardware, RBJ is Roland Janbergs, responsible for a lot of the code, especially for the early prototypes, and PRG is in-house musician Patty Goodson, the woman behind the memorable instant replay music. Topping the table is of course JAH and Jonathan couldn't resist adding a little panache to his own entry. "If you enter seven backspaces followed by JAH when you get a high score, my monogram, rather than my initials, will appear," he reveals. Well, you'd expect a game about food to have at least one Easter Egg, wouldn't you?









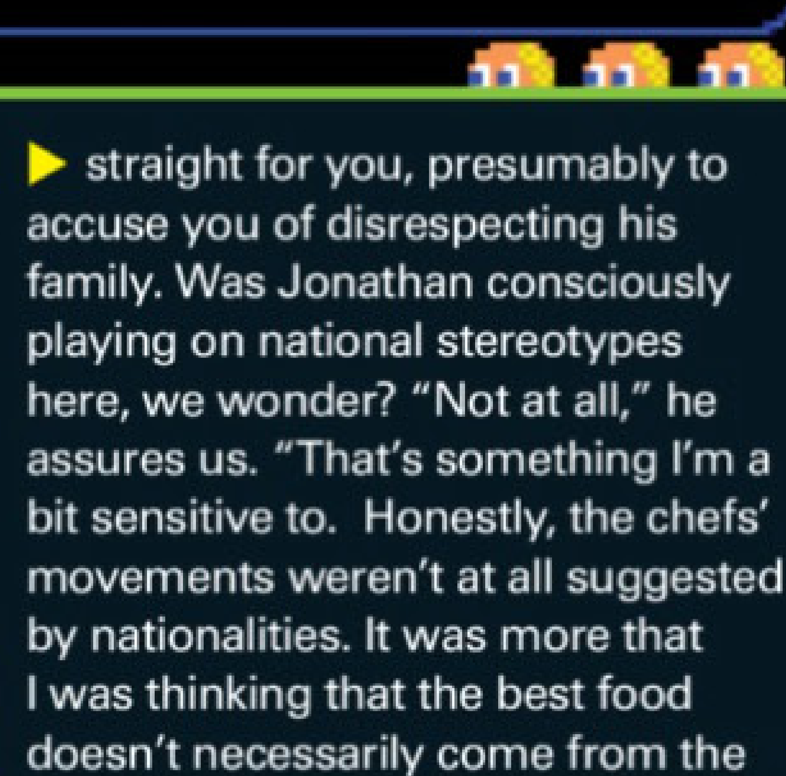






» [Arcade] The action in *Food Fight* becomes incredibly hectic – higher levels can be over in a matter of seconds.

» Jonathan Hurd (centre) conducts a meeting at GCC with fellow staffers (clockwise) Paul Moody, Alan Hodgkinson, Roland Janbergs, Betty Ryan (Tylko), Patty Goodson, Darrell Myers, Keith Sawyer & Mike Feinstein.



» The striking side art for Food Fight at its design stage



straight for you, presumably to accuse you of disrespecting his family. Was Jonathan consciously playing on national stereotypes here, we wonder? "Not at all," he assures us. "That's something I'm a bit sensitive to. Honestly, the chefs' movements weren't at all suggested by nationalities. It was more that I was thinking that the best food doesn't necessarily come from the United States!"

Knowing the individual quirks of your culinary foes is crucial for achieving high scores. At the beginning of each stage, you are given a second before the action begins to mentally plan your route. Should you make a desperate dash straight for the cone or head to that pile of bananas and take out one or two of the chefs to give you a clearer run? *Food Fight* requires lightning-fast reactions, both mental and physical, and levels can take under six seconds to complete. "At higher levels, it takes about a second," adds Jonathan. "The game turns into something completely different. It's totally reactive. If you're trying to set a high score and playing endless racks at level 125, it becomes a really intense experience. It saps your energy but you feel like you've really accomplished something."

» [Atari 7800] It's a shame *Food Fight* wasn't converted to more platforms, as the Atari 7800 version shows how well it can work outside of the arcade.

With levels becoming a blur of flying food and over in the blink of a soufflé, it's easy to miss some of the subtleties required to weave your way to the ice cream. Fortunately, Jonathan included a unique feature so you could properly digest your dexterity: the instant replay. Realising he had about half of the 8K of RAM the game board contained left unused, he figured out how to store the state of the joystick and throw button and accurately recreate the level just played.

"At first I made the replay happen at random," he explains, "but that meant if a level wasn't exciting, it felt like an intrusion. I tweaked it so it only happens if a chef and some flying food almost hit you. You have to have survived at least one close shave."

Triggering a replay therefore feels like a real achievement, especially as it's accompanied by a triumphant victory tune. The ditty, composed by Patty Goodson, has eight different versions so it fits exactly with the length of the replay, one of the many lovely touches you'll find throughout *Food Fight*. You can't help but smile when poor Charley gets plastered by all the remaining food on a level when he dies and at the way his head expands and tongue protrudes greedily as he scoffs the ice cream cone. "I actually toned down the tongue," sniggers Jonathan. "The original version was far more outrageous. His tongue went way further out and everyone in the lab was like, 'That's just too much!' "

Although Jonathan was lead designer and software developer for the game, he was constantly integrating feedback from others. As well as assembling a talented team of sous chefs to help cook up the game [see 'Fabulous Food Flingers' boxout on page 49], the collaborative ethos and physical environment at GCC allowed everyone to add ingredients to the mix. "It was a wonderful atmosphere," he smiles. "The layout of the place helped. We all had our own office to think and write complicated code and then there was a lab in the centre – a giant open space where all our prototype games could be loaded up. Others could stop and play it, give feedback, make suggestions… the challenge for me was to keep true to what made the gameplay good but incorporate all the great ideas that came in."

The creative process was also helped by the powerful technology pioneered by the game. Though the first playable version of *Food Fight* from early in 1982 used *Pac-man* hardware, development soon moved onto a new, cutting-edge setup. Built around the 16-bit Motorola 68000 chip, the board boasted 64K of RAM, 8K of ROM and could handle 32 sprites, essential for the frenzied on-screen action. The development environment comprised four linked Tektronix workstations which could run multiple game prototypes, costing a whopping $144,000.

GCC had clearly invested big money in becoming a leading game developer and though the revenue from the incredibly successful *Ms Pac-man* obviously helped, so did the $50,000 a month the studio was receiving from Atari, according to Steven Kent in his *Ultimate History of Videogames*. This arrangement had grown out of a settlement between the two parties – Atari had initially sued GCC for its *Missile Command* hack *Super Missile Attack* but ended up paying GCC to develop both arcade and console games – and with Atari all set to manufacture



Food Fight, Jonathan naturally started experimenting with Atari's existing controllers for his game.

"Deciding on the controls was the biggest challenge and ultimately the biggest problem," he sighs. "A standard *Pac-man* joystick didn't give us enough positions for throwing the food, so we tried using a knob and even considered a trackball. In the end, we went with an analogue joystick similar to the one on *Red Baron*. It meant you could throw in one of 72 directions, either when you were moving or standing still, which was useful if you were on the infinite pile of watermelons! At one point, I even filled a plastic banana with epoxy and used that as a joystick, which looked cool in the arcade tests but it broke when the first player gave it a good shove…"

A banana controller sounds especially appealing and would've predated *Monkey Ball*'s fruity stick by almost two decades. The flexibility the analogue controller gave players was exceptional, particularly given that each foodstuff had its own characteristics (the peas can't be flung far but have a broad spread, for example, whereas tomatoes are the go-to fruit for long-range attacks), but sadly joystick reliability problems affected the game's reception in arcades. Worse still, the game was released in 1983, just as the infamous videogame crash was starting to bite. "The traffic in arcades was really dropping off," laments Jonathan. "I think we sold 2,500 units and a few hundred of those were cocktail cabinets. It was a very limited production. Sure, it would've been great if it had come out at a different time, but I was very pleased with the final game…"

And so he should be. *Food Fight* is a beautifully balanced game, full of wit and polish, offering a wealth of tactical approaches to its escalating challenge. It was also the first arcade game we know of to use a 16-bit processor and to be written predominantly in a high-level language, C. Instant replays and the anti-aliasing used to soften the edges of the in-game text were also new in 1983.

So, plenty of firsts but also a last. After its release, Jonathan provided his source code for Keith Sawyer to do a great job converting *Food Fight* for the Atari 7800 and also oversaw the production of *Jr Pac-Man* and the unreleased *Nightmare*, but he never designed another videogame after his delicious debut. "The videogame industry fell into such a trough, it was hard to imagine making videogames as a career," he says. "I just feel extremely lucky to have been there at the right time, to be given that job by the founders of GCC and to have been given their trust, a guy who'd never made a game before… and I loved it."

> "I filled a plastic banana with epoxy and used that as a joystick…"
>
> Could Jonathan actually be Eric Wimp from 29 Acacia Road?

Jonathan left GCC in 1984 but remained involved with technology, albeit not videogames, and for the last two decades he's worked as a strategy consultant for a firm focusing on media and telecommunications. We can't help wondering if he's ever thought about revisiting his signature dish?

"It's not out of the question," he muses. "I loved writing software and I thought a really cool sequel would have two players simultaneously, one on each side of the screen, each heading to their cone on the other side, fighting off the chefs and each other to get to their ice cream first. Maybe it's something I'll do when I retire!"

Jonathan, that's certainly a mouth-watering prospect…

Many thanks to Mike Stulir at ACAM for the introduction and Jonathan and Martyn for the images.



» [Arcade] *Food Fight* was originally going to have a Roman theme, complete with a baying, toga-wearing audience.



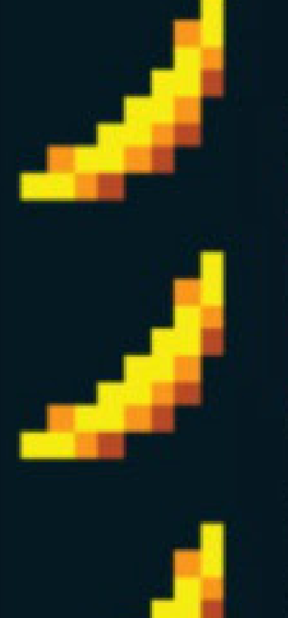
» [Arcade] The games is best played on an original cabinet with an analogue joystick – ACAM at Funspot, NH, has one.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

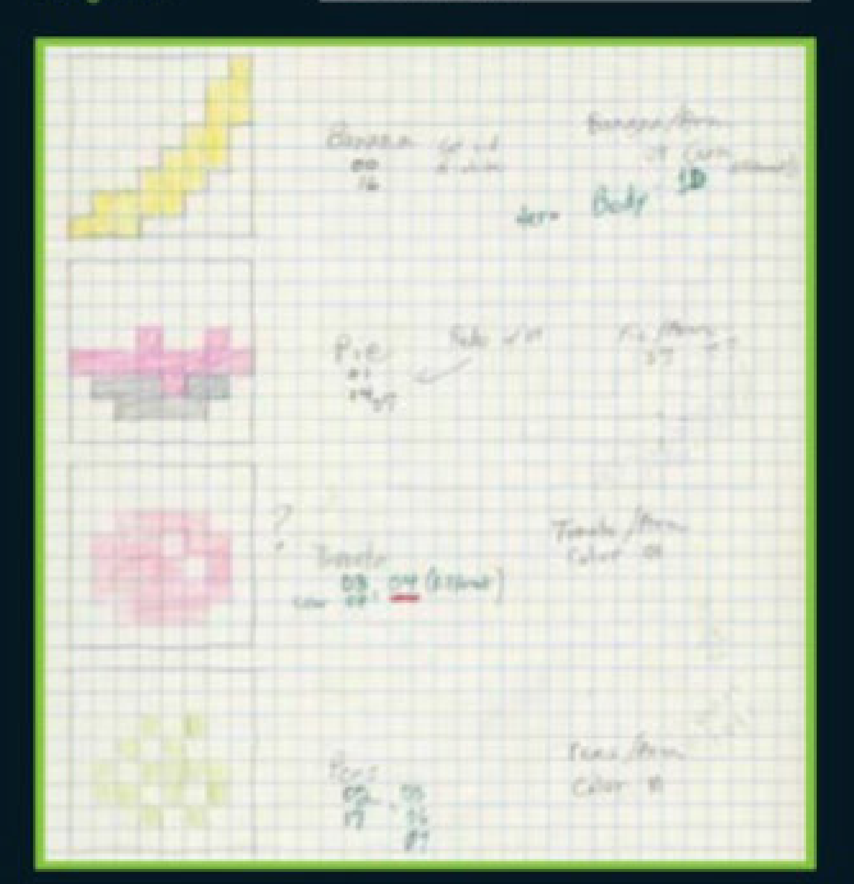
SUPER MISSILE ATTACK
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1981

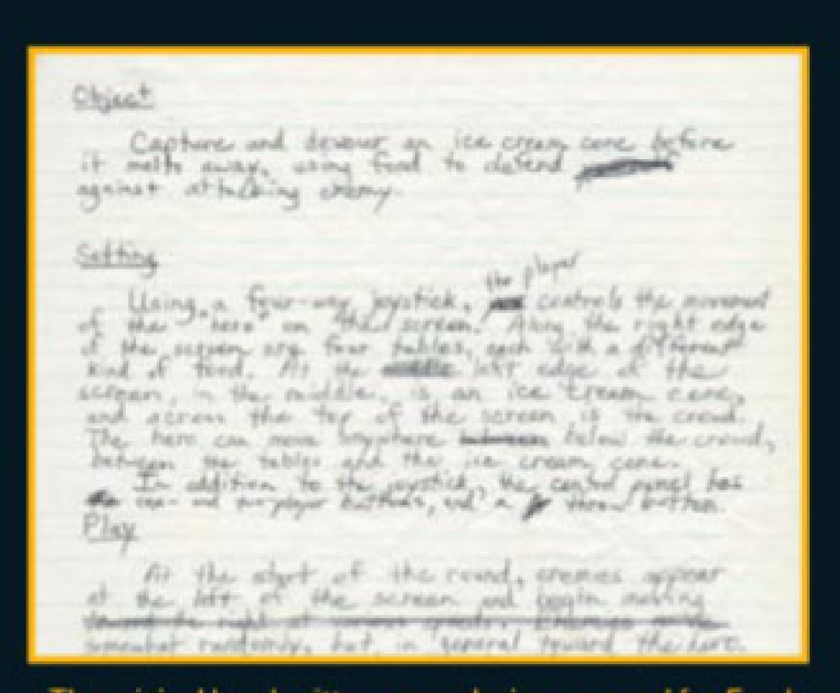
MS PAC-MAN (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1981

JR PAC-MAN
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1983



» Some of Jonathan's early sprite designs for the foodstuffs in the game.





Object

Capture and devour an ice cream cone before it melts away, using food to defend against attacking enemy.

Setting

Using a four-way joystick, the player controls the movement of the "hero" on the screen. Along the right edge of the screen are four tables, each with a different kind of food. At the left edge of the screen, in the middle, is an ice cream cone, and across the top of the screen is the crowd. The hero can move anywhere below the crowd, between the tables and the ice cream cone.

In addition to the joystick, the control panel has one- and two-player buttons, and a throw button.

Play

At the start of the round, enemies appear at the left of the screen and begin moving somewhat randomly, but in general toward the cone.

» The original handwritten game design proposal for *Food Fight* from January 1982.

DON'T PLAY WITH YOUR FOOD

Here are five more food-filled games to sink your teeth into



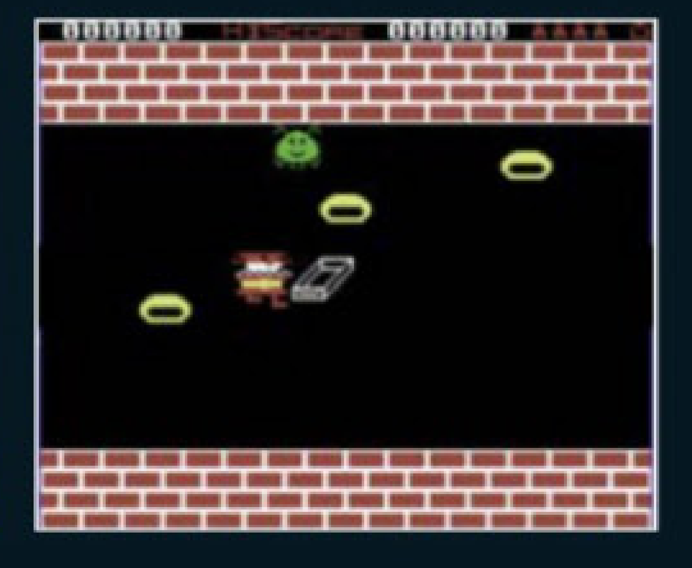
SPLAT! 1982

■ After the fairly leftfield *Joust*, John Newcomer designed this decidedly odd coin-op, which featured bizarre pie-flinging duels and frequent decapitation.



COOKIE 1983

■ One of Ultimate Play the Game's early Spectrum titles, this boasted the firm's trademark originality and polish in a kitchen nightmare that Gordon Ramsay would be proud of.



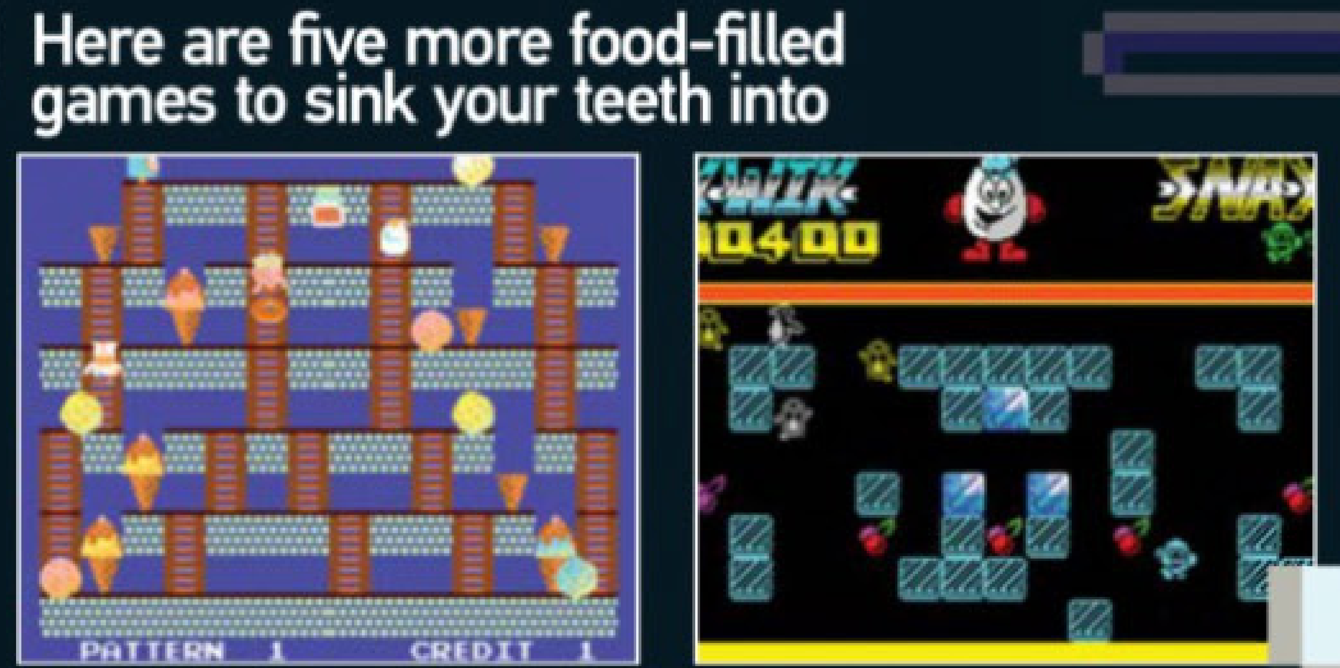
MR WIMPY 1984

■ A *BurgerTime* clone that offered a laborious opening screen and, ironically for a license based on a faded fast food chain, painfully slow beef-trampling action.



PETER PEPPER'S ICE CREAM FACTORY 1984

■ A sequel of sorts to *BurgerTime*, this swaps buns for cones and has Peter hurling around scoops of ice cream like he's a diary-obsessed dung beetle.



KWIK SNAX 1990

■ One of Dizzy's later outings, this is a very different dish on the C64 compared with the Spectrum and we prefer the tasty *Pengo* meets *Mr Do* action of the latter.

Geordie Racer

A RACE AGAINST SANITY



» BBC MICRO
» CHRISTOPHER RUSSELL & PETER SMITH » 1988

Like most UK kids of a certain age, I grew up with a school full of BBC Micros and have fond memories of the machine as a result. Seeing the class computer switched on was one of those special moments, much like when the video player was wheeled into the classroom, as you knew that whatever you were about to do was probably more fun than routine lessons. However, what was really exciting was when both were combined as part of the BBC's educational programme.

The show I remember most clearly is *Geordie Racer*. The TV series centred around a family of runners who also kept racing pigeons. It's an odd setup, but one that had a little more of an edge than the BBC's usual educational fare due to the decision to include a plot about a smuggling ring. I couldn't remember the accompanying game too well, though – and I think I know why.

Revisiting *Geordie Racer* reveals a game that doesn't make a whole lot of sense in any way, thanks to bizarre puzzle design and some gigantic departures from the TV show. Easily the most frustrating scene is the one here, in which any wrong move means instant death. Fly to the top of the tree? Bad idea, player one – the nefarious smuggler Baz is waiting there for you, and he's a pigeon fancier. What was this trial and error nightmare meant to teach me? I didn't know then, and over 20 years later I still haven't got a clue. *

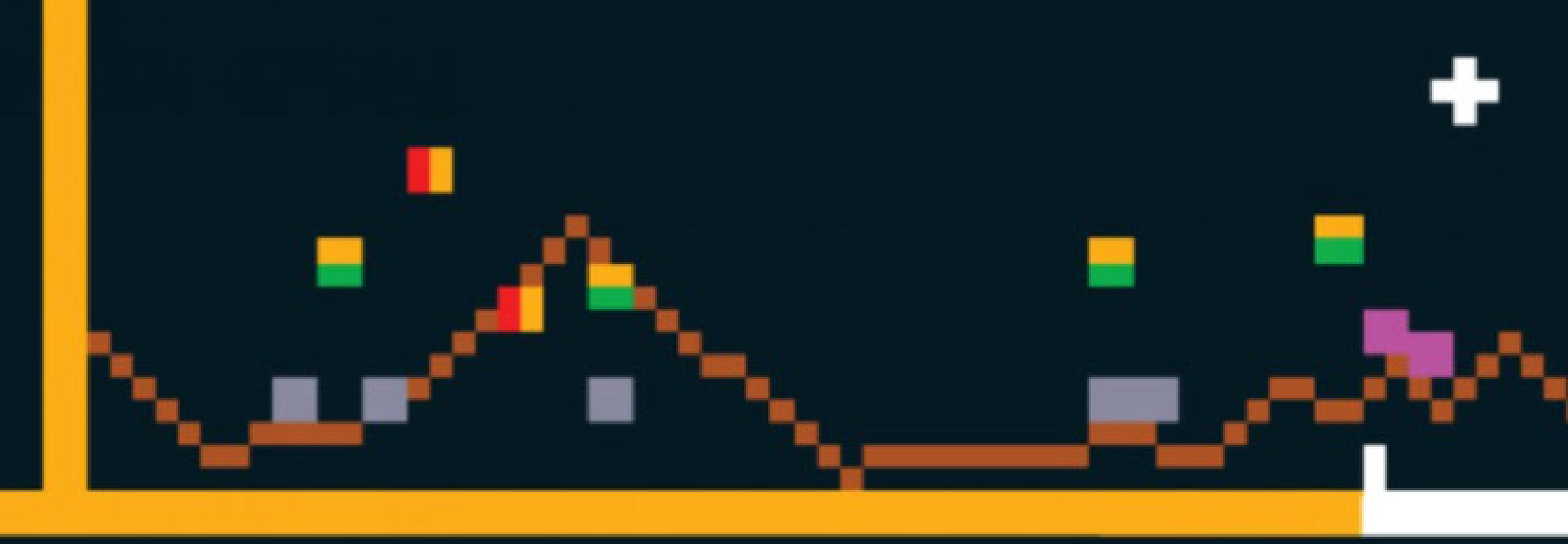


Oh dear! Ca
He's a pige
Try



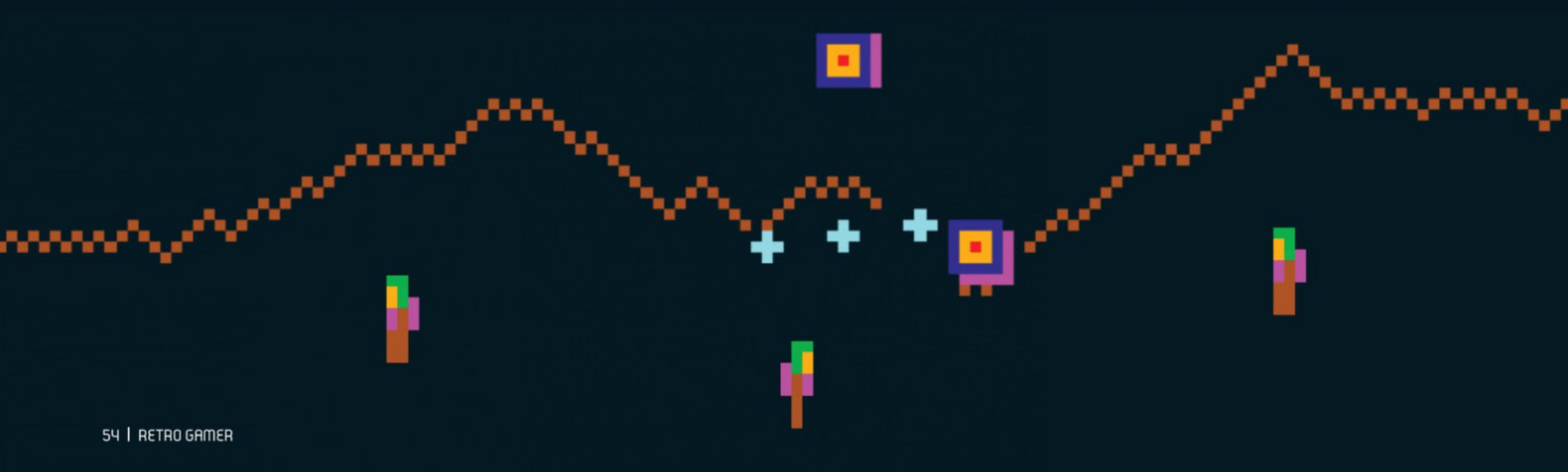
ught by Baz
on fancier!
again.





DEFE
A LE

NEARLY 35 YEARS YOUNG, DEFENDER REMAINS AN ARCADE GAME THAT GETS PEOPLE EXCITED. CRAIG GRANNELL TALKS TO DEFENDER'S CREATORS AND DEVELOPERS IT INSPIRED, FINDING OUT HOW AND WHY IT INSTIGATED A GAMING REVOLUTION





Unless you were there at the time, it's hard to appreciate *Defender*'s impact. "It was fast – possibly too fast," recalls *Uridium* creator Andrew Braybrook, who was dazzled by the way *Defender*'s spaceship spewed laser death as fast as you could hammer the fire button, rather than limiting your shots. "The theatrics were also very impressive," says Bob Polaro, who later squeezed the game into the Atari 2600.

For Archer Maclean, who'd go on to reimagine and extend *Defender* as *Dropzone* on the Atari 8-bit, the game wowed to the point he missed his late-night train after spotting it at King's Cross: "*Defender* was hard but superbly balanced, and the first game that showed a wraparound scrolling window into a much wider planetscape. I'd been playing a lot of *Scramble*, but *Defender* blew it out of the water with its super-smooth bidirectional scrolling and dramatically better graphics, with pixels flying all over the screen."

The game's difficulty helped it stand out. Veteran games creator Jeff Minter recalls first seeing *Defender* at a travelling fair in Southampton, watching a kid "have his arse handed to him," then dropping a coin and "having my own arse handed to me, repeatedly". Lifelong *Defender* fan and 30-year games journalist Julian Rignall had a similar experience: "The King's Hall in Aberystwyth was a dusty old arcade and had just started to bring in arcade machines. *Defender* turned up one day and I remember watching it and wondering what the hell was going on." Initial attempts to tackle the game were "an unmitigated disaster" as he grappled with *Defender*'s unique controls, conflicting goals and unforgiving nature, where you'd get shot out of the sky for having the audacity to ponder.

Yet *Defender* kept players coming back for more. Perseverance was rewarded with the chance to potentially master a game that offered a richness far beyond its contemporaries. And bafflement would slowly give way to breakthroughs; Julian says the "learning curve was almost like a brick wall," but you'd eventually suss out enemy behaviours and how to save from the machinations of alien craft astronauts ambling about the planet's surface. "I'd then stand next





"DEFENDER 101"

■ *Defender* finds you piloting a ship above a barren wraparound horizontally scrolling planet, fending off waves of varied aliens. Astronauts on the surface must be protected from Landers, who attempt to grab them and transform into crazed Mutants. Lose all the humans and the planet explodes, leaving you marooned in space, surrounded by Mutants.







to the machine and talk to people about it, in the hope of getting 10p off them to explain how to play it!" Archer adds that you'd then decipher the audio cues – human cries for help – and use them along with the scanner to plan your response: "It was a huge step up from the simple fixed-screen *Space Invaders* format from just two years earlier." And Harry Krueger, lead programmer of *Defender*-inspired PS4 shooter *Resogun*, says the controls (joystick for up/down; buttons for thrust/reverse/fire) were a key part of the initiation: "They required you to wire your brain in a very specific way, which gave *Defender* a unique personality and an aura of hardcore exclusivity. It took time for the controls to click, but you'd then find yourself 'in the zone', earning great satisfaction from runs where everything perfectly aligned."



» [Arcade] There's a surprising amount of variety to *Defender*'s enemies, ensuring no wave is ever the same.

Long-term play brought appreciation for the game's nuances. Archer became fond of the "rumble and crackle as your ship explodes," akin to a thunderclap, along with noticeable advancements in gameplay: "You were defending humans on a planet's surface, but could sacrifice some in order to survive longer. When an alien successfully abducted a human, it'd mutate into something nastier. And if you lost all the humans, the planet erupted, leaving you in space, surrounded by hordes of hostile foes – one last chance of survival, albeit damn hard!" Jeff became fascinated by *Defender*'s technical prowess: "Most games at the time were based on limiting tile-and-sprite architecture or monochrome bitmaps; but instead of simple sprite animation when you died, *Defender* gave you a spectacular pseudo-spherical particle explosion. It was so impressive you didn't really mind losing a life to see it. Better still, shot enemies shredded apart into their component pixels in an extremely satisfying fashion. Once you got going, *Defender* became a firework show."



» [Arcade] If these humans are carried to the top of the screen, the aliens will transform and home in on you.



Coupled with the innovative gameplay and controls – rescue and survive; the ability to analyse the game's entire state at a glance – Jeff isn't alone in saying "*Defender* made me want to do similar kinds of things" to what he calls a "striking, innovative and above all challenging

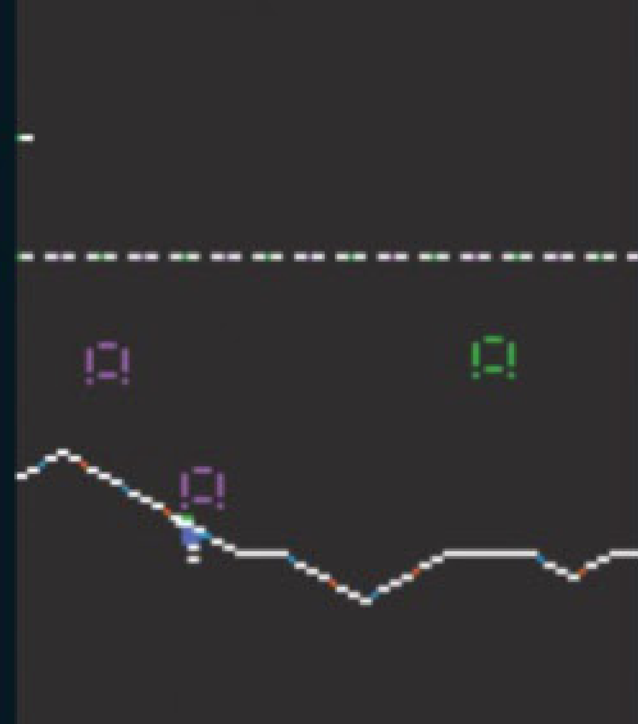
> "This idea of overwhelming the senses, creating a kind of speed-rush/adrenaline thrill"
> SAM DICKER EXPLAINS DEFENDER'S TWITCH-STYLE GAMEPLAY

CONVERSION CAPERS

Ten official Defender conversions – and how they fared

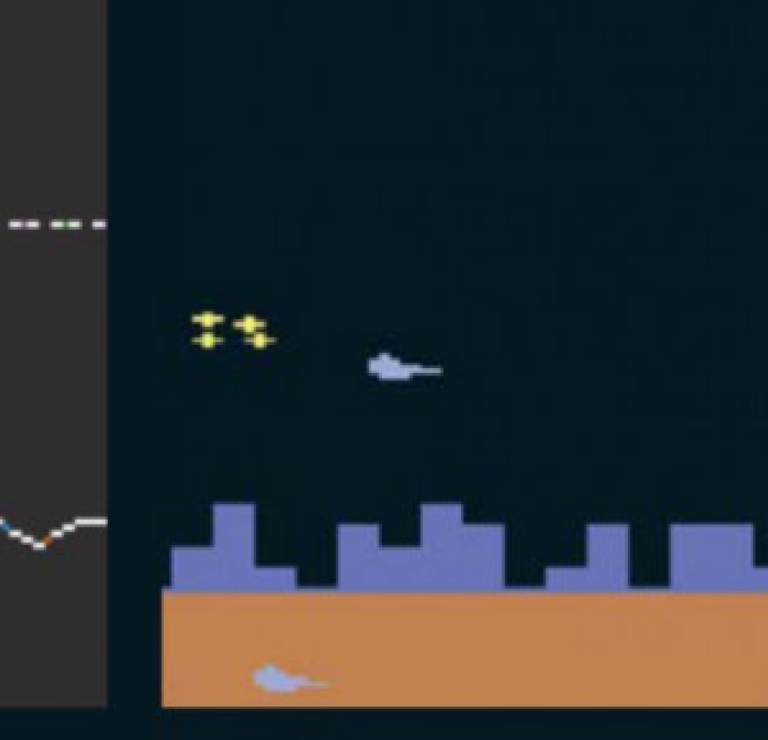
APPLE II 1983

The Apple II port at least retains the brutality of the original, along with lasers spewing across the screen, but otherwise this is an ugly, clunky, juddery conversion.



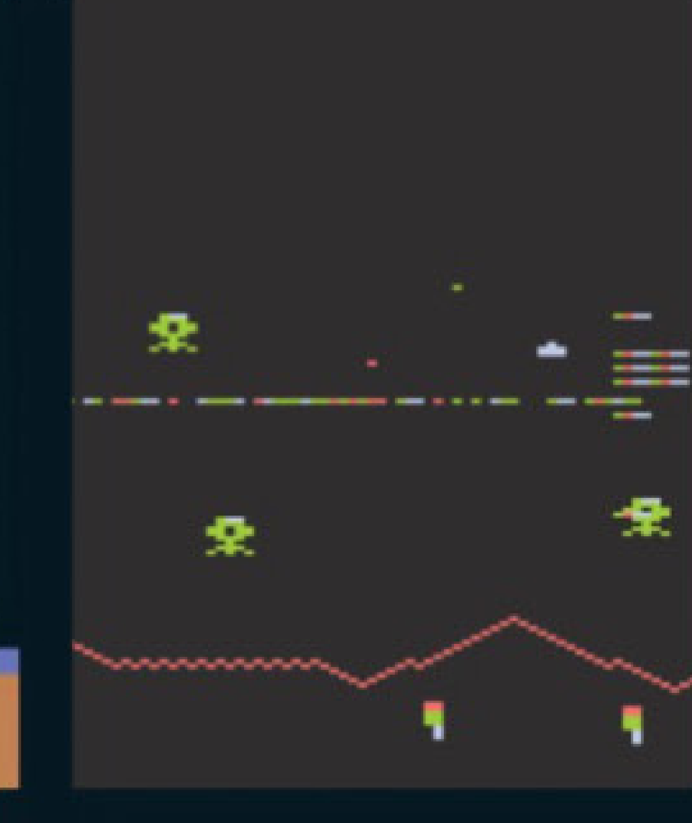
ATARI 2600 1981

The cityscape may distract some, but it's the flicker that undoes this early *Defender* attempt. *Stargate* for the 2600 is better, but still feels stodgy.



ATARI 5200 1982

It's a bit on the choppy side, but a brave attempt at mirroring the intensity of its arcade parent. The difficulty ramps up, and the visuals are impressive.



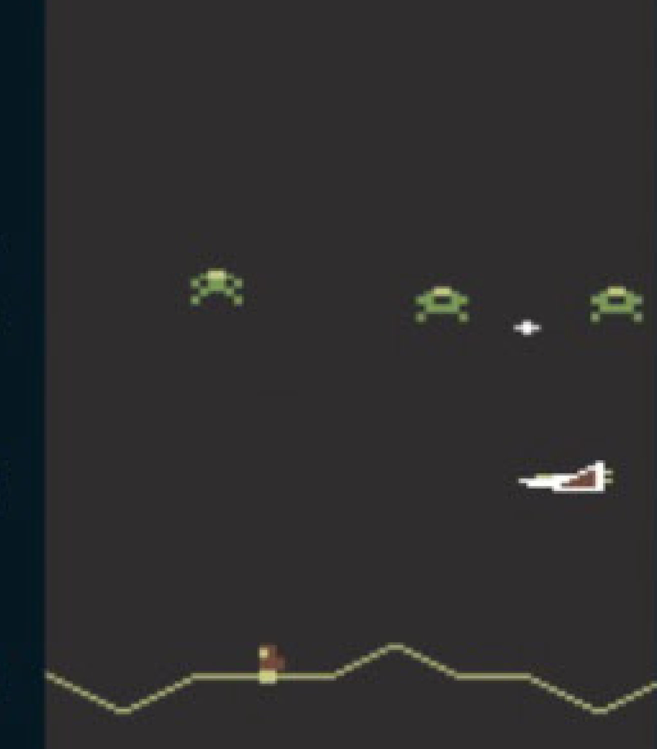
ATARI 8-BIT 1982

Like the Atari 5200 release, this is a tad slothful and jerky; but the audio's suitably chunky and the explosions are great – although oddly *Robotron*-like in nature.



C64 1983

As *Guardian* and *Insects In Space* showed, the C64 is capable of a great *Defender* game. This official version is merely okay, lacking the spark of the coin-op.

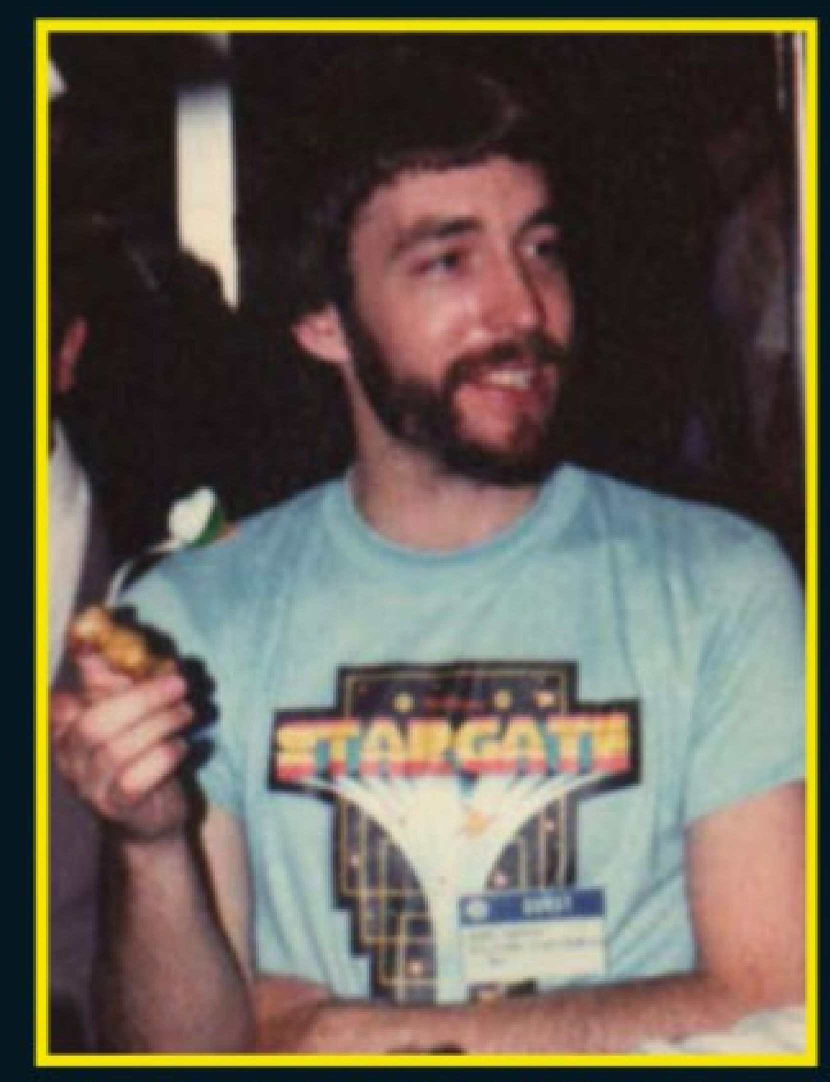




game that was head and shoulders above the competition of the day".

Perhaps *Defender*'s biggest advance, though, was, as Andrew says, having "much less of a controlled environment" than other games of the era; *Space Invaders* was "comparatively concise", and even the relative freedom of *Asteroids* was contained within a single screen. On speaking to *Defender*'s creators, it's apparent that although the game evolved organically, there was a strong desire throughout to do something different from what went before. "It wasn't that those other games weren't fun, but after playing them for months, you'd be asking why can't there be a bigger world, more variety and more of an ecosystem," says Eugene Jarvis, *Defender*'s co-creator and development lead. "The universes were just too small, and the worlds were just too simplistic."

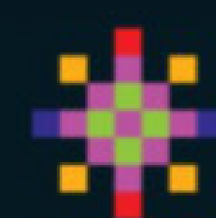
Co-designer Larry DeMar concurs: "We wanted to get away from one-dimensional controls, on both *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian*, where you were stuck going left and right. We looked at it as there was a bigger world out there." Eugene had also grown frustrated by what he terms the "artificial stupidity" of the likes of your opponents in *Space Invaders*:



» Eugene Jarvis, proudly showing off his *Stargate* T-shirt at a gaming event.

"You'd be thinking: Why can't they do more interesting things? Why do they always go one step at a time, in such a mechanistic pattern?" With such rote design, Eugene figures the player might as well not exist: "It's like crossing a freeway where the cars have the same pattern. Whether you're there or not, the cars will always do the same thing."

Sam Dicker, who primarily worked on *Defender*'s visuals and sound, adds that the team was also heavily into pinball, and that affected the game's development: "I wanted us to ape that reflex twitch kind of pinball, where you need quick reactions



to deal with a whole bunch of stuff going on at once. There was this idea of overwhelming the senses, creating a kind of speed-rush/adrenaline thrill. As a player, you'd have to create some kind of order in a chaotic world, as the game constantly tried to throw you off balance – just like in a good pinball game."

The idea of game as clockwork automaton was eradicated by a layer of semi-randomness via designed algorithmic behaviour. Basic though *Defender*'s enemy AI turned out to be, it proved effective. Julian thinks it was "outstanding" for the time, with each creature having distinct ways of acting: "So you had to devise new techniques, and adapt as you played, because the Baiters, Bombers, Mutants and Swarmers weren't just following patterns like enemies in games of old. You couldn't always predict what was going to happen, and *Defender* immediately felt more like you were improvising, trying to fool the machine. But if you second-guessed it too soon, it'd figure that out and shoot where it predicted you were going to be. This all felt very intelligent, and *Defender* was the first arcade game that truly felt alive."

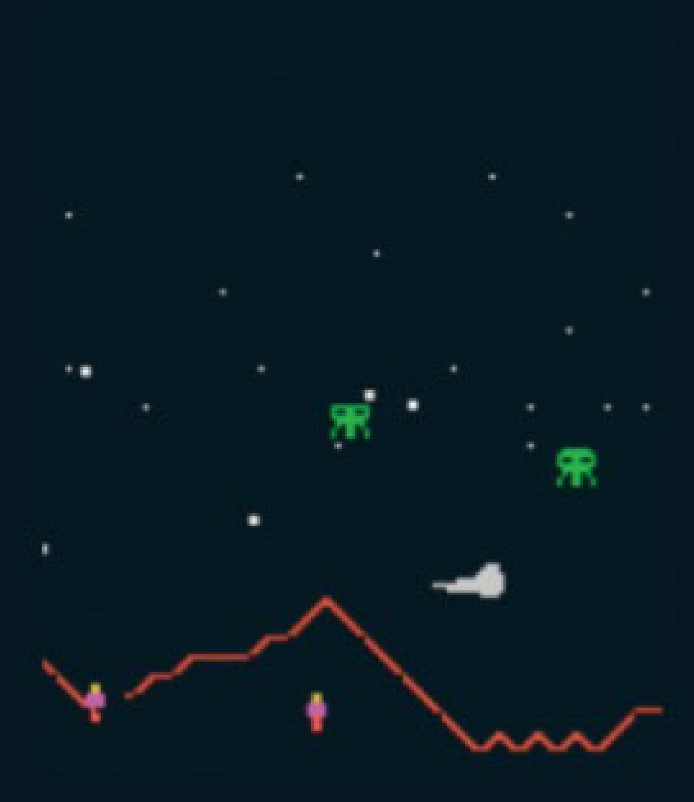
Larry reveals that this aspect of *Defender* in part came from other games' shortcomings: "Those fixed patterns of play that could be predicted, like in *Asteroids* where you could shoot that little spaceship over and over… we weren't going to make that mistake." And Eugene says in affording *Defender* the means to provide dynamic feedback to the player, really interesting things started happening. "A lot of the really cool things were just complete accidents – amazing stuff that the team was smart enough to not take out," he jokes. "But, yeah, *Defender* did turn into more of a jazz combo than some kind of symphony written out by a composing genius." And in creating enemies that could react, some 'sentience' evolved that "proved more interesting to relate to, and that had more of a life,



» [Arcade] The gameplay in *Defender* is fast and furious, often requiring split-second timing.

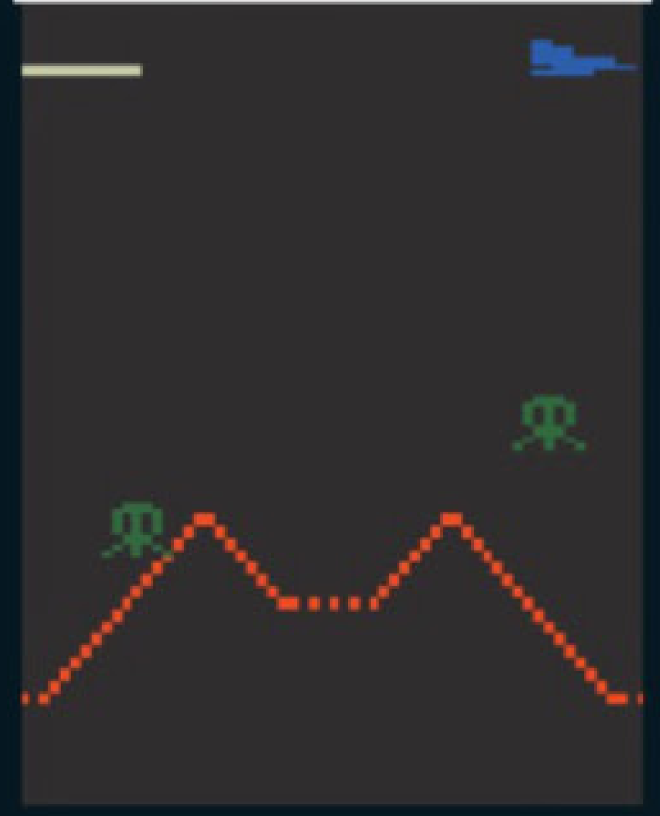
COLECOVISION 1983

■ Impressive for the hardware, but not a great *Defender*. The sluggish feel robs the game of intensity, and reversing the craft makes it feel like a ferry.



INTELLIVISION 1983

■ The Intellivision has a good try at recreating *Defender*, with surprising smoothness and speed, and plenty of colour; but it's all a bit on the graceless side.



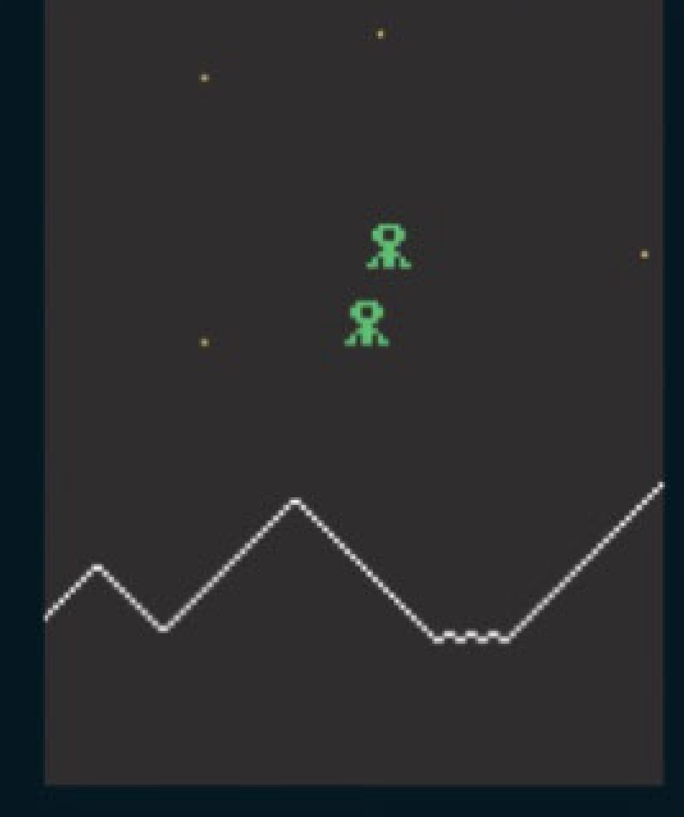
PC 1983

■ This is a strange one, with oddball keyboard controls that include a 'stop vertical motion' button. With a joystick it's better, but still a pretty mediocre outing.



TI-99 1983

■ We weren't expecting much and it's a bit choppy with weedy explosions. Surprisingly, though, it often feels like *Defender*, due to plenty of nippy, frenetic gameplay.

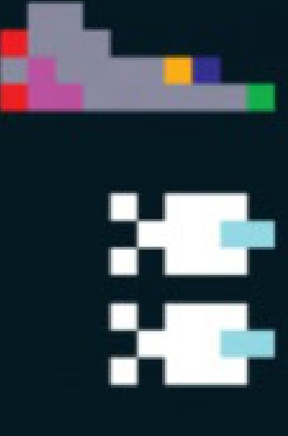


VIC-20 1983

■ Yet more juddery scrolling, but it feels more like the arcade game than the C64 release. Better explosions, too, again along the lines of the Atari games.







SIX OF THE BEST: DEFENDER SEQUELS AND TRIBUTES

The best Defender-like games that you just have to play



STARGATE

RELEASED: Arcade
YEAR: 1981

■ Also known as *Defender II*, *Stargate* is *Defender* but more so. Again, the aim is to protect the humans and shoot everything else, but this time there's also the 'stargate' of the title, which can warp you to humans under attack. A solid action-packed sequel that needs to be played.



DROPZONE

RELEASED: Atari 8-bit
YEAR: 1984

■ Although heavily inspired by *Defender*, *Dropzone* moves the concept on in a number of key areas, notably the need to carry the surface-dwelling humans to an outpost. Also, in being designed for the joystick, it avoids the awkwardness of many *Defender* conversions.



INSECTS IN SPACE

RELEASED: C64
YEAR: 1989

■ The main sprite looks rather suspect in these more enlightened times; otherwise, this is a ferocious *Defender*-like blaster, doubling your workload due to two planet surfaces. To aid you, there's a *Stargate*-esque dust cloud for warping to kidnapped humans.



DATASTORM

RELEASED: Amiga
YEAR: 1989

■ This brilliant, brutally tough shooter pays tribute to *Defender* and *Dropzone*, and perhaps foreshadows *Turrican*, in marrying side-on shooting, pod rescuing and huge screen-sized enemies that lumber around while more fleet adversaries try very hard to kill you.



STRIKE FORCE

RELEASED: Arcade
YEAR: 1991

■ More or less to *Defender* what *Smash TV* is to *Robotron: 2084*, *Strike Force* drags the original title kicking and screaming into the 1990s. There's little elegance here, as you're bombarded by varied enemies, extra weapons and screens full of explosions. Give it a try.



RESOGUN

RELEASED: PS4
YEAR: 2013

■ Showing that *Defender*'s flame will never be extinguished, *Resogun* takes its core concepts and neatly transforms them into a thoroughly modern shooter. The formations are more predictable than *Defender*'s anarchy, but this title is every bit as demanding.

» [Arcade] Save as many humans as possible as they all add to your bonus at the end of each wave.





» [Arcade] While it's possible to teleport out of trouble, it may land you in even more danger.

than automatons going left to right on a grid."

This sense of a vibrant ecosystem was enhanced further by the notion of multiple goals. Friendlies on the planet had to be protected, shifting *Defender* away from the simplicity of 'kill or be killed'. "You suddenly had this conflicting goal structure, which gave you a richer game," explains Eugene. "You constantly had to make decisions regarding what to do next – it wasn't so obvious as shooting the last Space Invader rampaging towards you at 300mph. And because of the complexity of the system, you could start reading more into it than what was really there." In part, this was down to your enemies having multiple goals too – Landers would happily shoot you but also wanted to abduct roaming astronauts, which they'd fuse with to become crazed Mutants. "It made all earlier games feel like they were designed by paranoid schizophrenics who thought everyone was out to get them. There was a richness where the enemies were no longer trivial, just following you around and shooting you all the time," Eugene continues. "And then we thought that if you're going to have this battle between 'good' and 'evil', and a kind of relative freedom, it should go further, hence why the player can shoot the astronauts and go rogue. To have a rich world, you can't just be restricted to doing good things!"

But it wasn't just the gameplay that wowed – Julian enthuses that it looked fantastic as well: "Many of the enemies were slightly abstract, geometric and really cool-looking, and your spaceship had this laser beam that ran the full length of the screen rather than itty-bitty bullets. Then there were touches like the ship moving back as you accelerated, to maximise your field of view, or towards the centre of the screen on decelerating, in anticipation of you hitting reverse. It felt very tactile, with a smoothness almost like swiping on modern smartphones."

Perhaps the most impressive visual feat, though, was those

explosions. Sam says they arrived from a lack of artistry in the team combined with his own desire to contribute something new: "The first task Eugene gave me was to create an enemy explosion… [He] said to mimic the three-frame fireball in *Galaxian*. But I wanted to do something that had never been seen before, and came up with the particle-based effect." The beauty of the solution was that it didn't require artwork, yet looked more beautiful than any hand-drawn animation, scattering a character's pixels across the screen.

The effect was further enhanced by explosions differing based on where an enemy was hit: "If you hit the top, it would explode downwards, and if you hit the centre, it would explode evenly," says Sam. "It created more variety in the effect. I didn't like the idea of seeing the same thing over and over…" The pinnacle came when Sam realised he had a dedicated machine to play with when the player's ship blew up: "It turned into a massive firework explosion, with dozens of particles, the colour palette changing as they faded out. It was a reward for being killed – that kind of last taste, so you'd go back and play more."

Eugene says the team "really got into the explosion choreography," a "cornucopia of eruptions almost like forensic ballistics", and thinks it further validated the algorithmic approach: "There was no way an artist doing pre-canned art could have done this, and yet it created such a rich, beautiful effect that was different every time. It really allowed us to leverage the lack of artistry, by using physics as art. It became art. That's the beauty of the algorithmic world of *Defender* – it became so much more than what we put into it, because it was a living, breathing thing."

The audio was similarly impressive. Jeff says the effects were the best he'd heard, "beautiful algorithmically constructed sweeping phasing noises, slams and bangs as solid as the slamming of a Rolls Royce car door – and even the protracted electronic burp the machine emitted when you dropped a coin was striking and unlike anything else around at the time". Julian agrees, and was especially impressed by the "incredibly meaty explosions", saying that "when you hit things, it really felt like you were hitting something".

Sam says many of *Defender*'s sounds were based on the audio subsystem in Williams pinball machines, created in Eugene's G-Wave program. This, recalls Sam, was "quite unpredictable, in that you couldn't easily say you wanted a specific sound and program it – instead, you'd try a range of parameters and make a palette of sounds that you'd decide how to use." Further effects were then custom-designed by Sam himself: explosions, the thrust noise, and so on. Much of the meatiness came from being able to design everything together: "We developed the sound effects along with the cabinet and speaker, and so you got an effect like with a guitar amp, where everything works synergistically with the sound itself. You don't get the same effect through headphones, because you lack the impact where the whole cabinet's rattling and vibrating around you!"

Perhaps surprisingly, although *Defender*'s various concepts excited the team and worked nicely, the game itself was, according to Larry, "really terrible for 90 per cent of its development life". Eugene concurs: "For months, we had an ecosystem, including little astronauts strolling about, and I showed it to management. They thought I was psycho. There's no gameplay!" Adds Larry: "It was a great flying simulator – a technical feat no one had achieved before, but the idea of playing it for more than ten seconds made no sense."

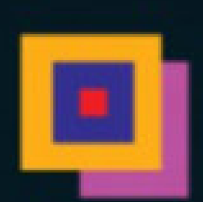
What cemented *Defender* was the addition of conflict. "Without that, like a movie, a game is nothing," asserts Eugene. "So *Defender* only really came together when we had the Landers going after the astronauts, and then when we added the Mutant to penalise you further for failure. All of a sudden, you cared about things. Of course, this is all incredibly basic stuff, and many other games have this on day one. But instead, we'd developed this



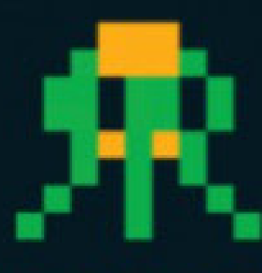
» Archer Maclean is a big fan of Eugene's games. Here they are proudly posing in front of the rather excellent *Robotron: 2084*.

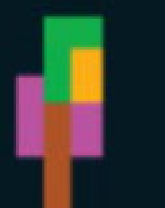
"The enemies were no longer trivial, just following you around and shooting you all the time"

EUGENE JARVIS DISCUSSES DEFENDER'S ADVANCED AI











wonderful universe where nothing really happened, and had to add that ingredient back in."

It's a sobering thought that a title now prized for its gameplay nearly became distracted itself by clever effects and ideas, but soon *Defender* was in front of people at test sites, where Eugene recalls people were "going crazy with 50,000 points". He remembers the developers could get twice that score, which they thought was heroic; little did they know that people would later be scoring in the millions.

But although *Defender* resonated with gamers, its creators are unsure how heavily it influenced the wider industry. Eugene says *Defender* obviously affected his own work, but the notion of "a mechanic of a large world with freedom of motion, where you could go anywhere you wanted" remained frustratingly rare, only really echoed a decade later during the rise of the first-person shooter. Larry, though, believes *Defender* had immediate widespread impact: "That idea the world could be bigger, the vibrant special effects, the use of random elements, and the Eugene Jarvis 'high firepower' trademark… in all those ways, *Defender* was revolutionary and influenced subsequent games."

» [Arcade] The radar at the top of the screen is extremely useful, allowing you to look out for massing enemies.



"That idea the world could be bigger, the vibrant special effects, the use of random elements…"

LARRY DEMAR ON HOW DEFENDER INFLUENCED GAME DESIGN

» [Arcade] You'll need to be a pretty good *Defender* player if you plan on hitting the top of the score board.



HOW DEFENDER USHERED IN THE ERA OF PROFESSIONAL GAMING

Eugene Jarvis says one of *Defender*'s biggest legacies is professional gaming leagues: "Because *Defender* was a kind of virtuoso game, players could do amazing things, and that kicked off the idea of it being legitimate to be a videogame player." He recalls it was an amazing sight to watch someone who'd mastered the game, with the most dedicated players eventually embarking on marathon sessions that could last for days.

Sam Dicker reasons that this largely occurred because the *Defender* team "gave a lot of credit to the player" and "really believed that players would rise to the challenge". This was, he remembers, a big risk at the time: "There was the danger people would pay for a game, play for seconds, and get frustrated when they lost."

Indeed, *Defender* kept people keen, and kickstarted a whole subculture of hardcore games players. "I guess we promoted the idea of the player as more than just a sucker whose money you were taking," adds Eugene. "It became a true sport and through mastery, you could leave people in awe of your abilities – but it required the richness of controls, gameplay and the sense of freedom *Defender* provided."

On the home front, Julian remembers countless clones and tributes, most failing through messing up the controls: "*Dropzone* was an exception, because it was designed around the standard home joystick, then took everything else about *Defender* and turned it into its own game". Elsewhere, *Defender*'s influence was less overt, but noticeable: "It's easy to give *Defender* props – partly because it's true – for any subsequent bidirectionally scrolling game, but I don't think titles like *Fort Apocalypse* could have existed without it."

What surprises Julian is how entrenched single-direction games with fixed enemy patterns then became – in the arcade and on home machines – which he puts down to them being less complex than *Defender*-style titles. Certainly, *Defender* was initially tough to convert. Bob recalls "choosing a city terrain instead of mountains due to graphical constraints on the Atari 2600," and trying hard to "in some way emulate all the buttons, depending on the ship's location."

But as technology evolved, programmers could increasingly tap into *Defender*'s spirit. "It had speed at a high frame rate, which I always strived for, and multiple objectives, so you got more tactical decisions to make," says Andrew. "With *Uridium* on the C64, the side-to-side scrolling is a similarity, of course – that idea of hurtling from left to right and back at speed was something I wanted." Jeff, who's spent over 30 years creating high-octane shooters, says there was "so much I loved in *Defender*, and which influenced me greatly," from "solid-sounding sound effects, to the explosions that broke characters into their component 'atoms' ".

Larry reckons *Defender* still has plenty to teach. Through a lack of horsepower in the technology, programmers were once "forced to make a really intriguing, fun, balanced game, because without that there wasn't much to have people want to play it". Today, he questions whether too much emphasis is placed on visuals, due to the "sheer effort required to make a game that doesn't look embarrassing being orders of magnitude above the effort that went into *Defender*". He thinks the best games today are still "created by designers that haven't lost the notion that no matter how hard it is to create the graphics, there just has to be some interesting gameplay in there."

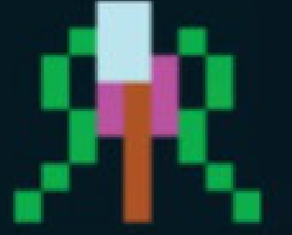
This line of thinking dovetails with Harry's. Too young to experience *Defender* first-hand in the arcades, he nonetheless recognises its importance: "Good design is about setting meaningful constraints. At the time of *Defender*, limitations were imposed by the hardware, forcing developers to make very careful decisions. They had to distil the experience to its essentials, and there's an undeniable charm and cleverness in how the best of those games struck the right balance and used so few and simple elements to craft deep, engaging experiences."

Harry believes *Defender* "has nothing more than it absolutely needs," and everything that's there "exists only to serve the gameplay". This impacted on his thinking during *Resogun*'s creation, which utilised many *Defender* concepts, albeit in a manner that was more generally accessible: "We communicate the









DEFENDER AT A GLANCE

BEFORE DEFENDER

SPACE INVADERS ■ ARCADE ■ 1978

ASTEROIDS ■ ARCADE ■ 1979

BATTLEZONE ■ ARCADE ■ 1980

DEFENDER ■ ARCADE ■ 1981

MORE FROM EUGENE

STARGATE ■ ARCADE ■ 1981

ROBOTRON: 2084 ■ ARCADE ■ 1982

BLASTER ■ ARCADE ■ 1983

NARC ■ ARCADE ■ 1988

SMASH TV ■ ARCADE ■ 1990

CRUIS'N USA ■ ARCADE ■ 1994

INSPIRED BY DEFENDER

PLANETOID ■ BBC MICRO ■ 1982

DROPZONE ■ ATARI 8-BIT ■ 1984

GUARDIAN ■ C64 ■ 1984

DATASTORM ■ AMIGA ■ 1989

INSECTS IN SPACE ■ C64 ■ 1991

DEFENDER 2000 ■ ATARI JAGUAR ■ 1995

RESOGUN ■ PS4 ■ 2013

> "Go wherever you want, do whatever you want to do"
>
> EUGENE JARVIS EXTOLS THE FREEDOM OFFERED BY DEFENDER

location of key gameplay elements in a more natural way, through being able to see 'around' the cylinder that comprises each level rather than requiring a scanner, and have more approachable controls."

Defender's legacy is safe, nearly 35 years on. "It was a landmark title and remains a hell of a blast today," says Archer. "It significantly moved the goalposts away from hundreds of *Space Invader* clones, and introduced new gameplay mechanics and a level of complexity not seen before". Harry agrees, adding that "*Defender* will forever stand as a monument to the timeless gameplay values of our medium, and represent an era of purity in game design." Larry simply calls it "remarkable", and says he "never could have imagined people would be emulating *Defender* on computers, playing the game they programmed all these years later, broadcasting marathons on Twitch TV to set new records".

As for Eugene, he mulls that *Defender*'s main legacy may be that simple idea of freedom: "In the infancy of videogames, we spent a lot of time watching TV – a broadcast medium that was dictated. We were being 'programmed', and the videogame was kind of a revolt. But with games where the same thing happens every time in exactly the same way, you're almost not playing – you're watching someone else's design, and are being 'programmed' again. It's like playing *Guitar Hero* compared with a real guitar – you think you're playing an instrument, but you're really only pretending. I like to think *Defender* was the ultimate rebellion against that at the time – go wherever you want, do whatever you want to do; you were Jimi Hendrix, not just pressing four buttons and tricking yourself into pretending you were a rock star!" ✱

CLASSIC MOMENTS

Rocket Knight Adventures

» **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE » **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI » **RELEASED:** 1993

Every hero needs a villain – Superman has Lex Luthor, Mario has Bowser, and Sparkster has his own in the form of Axel Gear. The corrupt rocket knight has been a thorn in your side since you first encountered him, and you're pretty sure he will be for the rest of the game. As stage five draws to a close, it seems like a standard setup for a big boss chase, with Axel powering up his gigantic robot pig suit as you negotiate a series of high platforms at speed to evade him.

But at the end of your run, something quite magical happens – there's another robo-pig suit, it's just as big as his and it's facing in the right direction for a good old scrap. Suddenly, you're back on even ground! It's not the prettiest fight ever seen in videogames, nor is it easy – after all, nobody ever said a fair fight would be – but you've got two opossums fighting each other in metal pig suits. That's all we ever want from videogames, really. *





BIO

Konami was a relative latecomer to the Mega Drive, arriving almost four years after its launch, but the firm quickly made up for lost time with a range of technically impressive games. In an era dominated by mascot platformers, *Rocket Knight Adventures* looked like it had a good chance to stand out, receiving rave reviews, a sequel named after star man Sparkster, a SNES spin-off and even a comic strip in *Sonic The Comic*. However, our favourite jetpack-equipped opossum quickly faded into obscurity, only briefly re-emerging for cameos before a one-off downloadable adventure in 2010.

MORE CLASSIC ROCKET KNIGHT ADVENTURES MOMENTS



Sparks fly

Your first extended jetpack trip is certainly a memorable one as you head out over the open water, kicking up spray in your wake. Of course, it's not an uninterrupted journey, as you'll soon be interrupted by the pigs of the Devotindos Empire, who set about ruining your day – and that's to say nothing of the giant mechanical snake…



Red zone

As you head towards the climax of the game's opening stage, the stakes are continually raised, and nothing lets you know that you're in serious trouble like being chased by a big wall of fire. As jets of flame shoot forth from the pursuing conflagration, you're treated to a background which is shimmering in the heat. An excellent detail, that.



A moment to reflect

Konami's programming mastery is on display here, as Sparkster encounters a reflective pool of instant death. Not only are the reflection effects pretty, they serve a crucial gameplay purpose – large crystal formations block your view of Sparkster midway through this section of the stage, and you'll rely on the reflections you see to determine his position.



Scenic smog

Sparkster's incursion into enemy territory is one of the most spectacular sights to behold on the Mega Drive. The cityscape of Devotindos might be a grey and smoky, but it's one we could look at all day – the background is beautifully drawn, with clever use of colour masking the limitations of the hardware, and everything scrolls by incredibly quickly.

Minority Report

CLASSIC GAMES YOU'VE NEVER PLAYED



© Evan-Amos

VTECH CREATIVISION

The Eighties were a turbulent time in the videogame industry with every man and his dog trying to get in on the act. Kieren Hawken looks at one of the more obscure entries into the market – the VTech CreatiVision

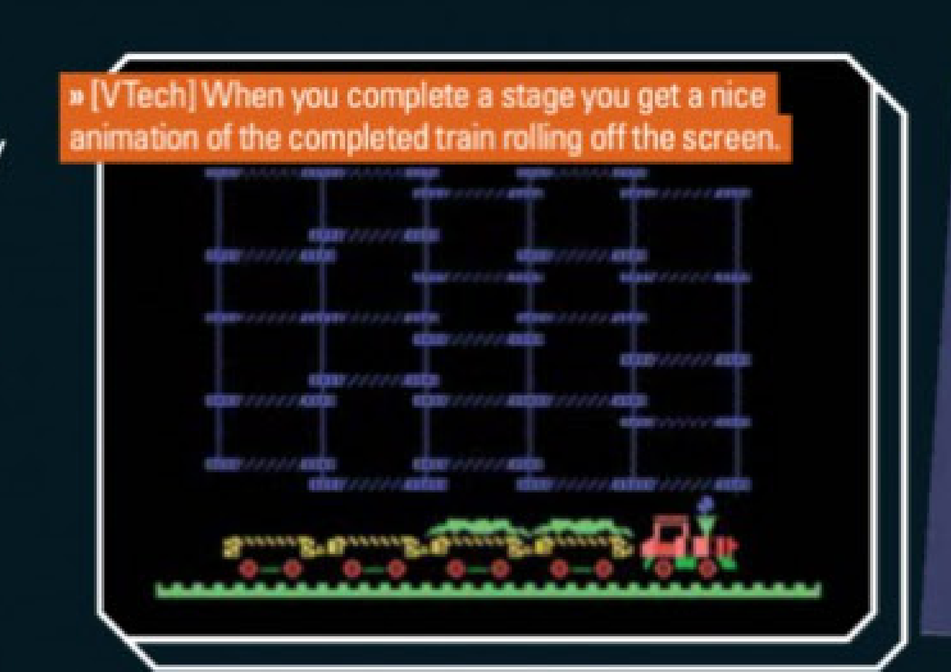
LOCOMOTIVE

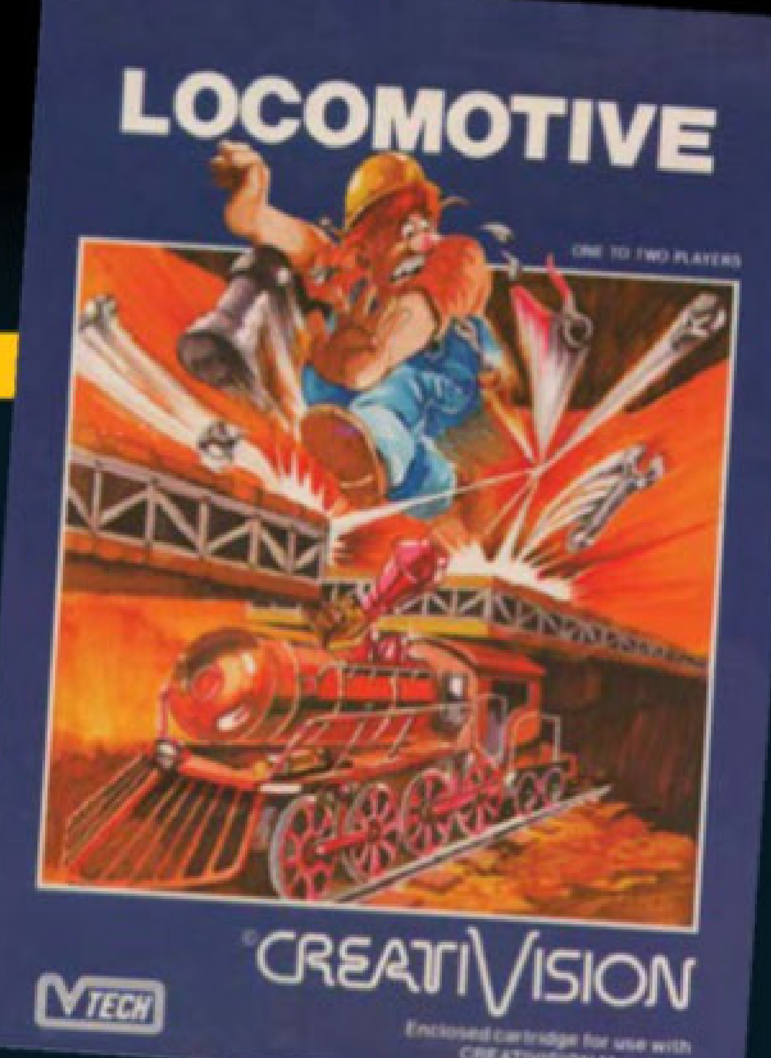
■ DEVELOPER: VTECH ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **One of the first things you will notice about the CreatiVision when you peruse its limited catalogue of games is that the vast majority of them are clones of popular early Eighties arcade games.** Some of them are even down right rip-offs that led to law suits from the coin-op manufacturers (see *Crazy Chicky/ Crazy Pucker*). One of the most popular arcade games of 1982 was Data East's brilliant *BurgerTime*. Originally known as *Hamburger*, before it was renamed for the West, *BurgerTime* saw you take the role of stressed out chef Peter Pepper. Our hero is trying to put together a series of giant burgers – including the bun, salad and beef patty. He does this by climbing the various platforms and ladders and then walking over the ingredients to make them drop onto the plates below. However, this task is made much harder by the three antagonists looking to stop you. One touch from Mr Pickle, Mr Egg or Mr Hot Dog and you lose a life. Fortunately, you are equipped with a limited amount of pepper which you can spray in their face to stall them temporarily.

Now, as you have probably worked out already, *Locomotion* is a clone of this very game. But, to be fair, one that makes enough changes to get away with it, despite the core gameplay staying exactly the same. Instead of being set in a burger bar, *Locomotion* is located, as you may have guessed, down by the railway yard. Your job as the lone engineer is to rebuild a steam engine, complete with carriages and cargo. This is done in exactly the same way as *BurgerTime*: you climb the platforms to walk over the various parts and watch them drop to form the engine below. Just like the Data East game, there are also enemies out to stop you in your tracks and, in another carbon copy, the pepper has been replaced with oil. But rather than just stunning the bad guys, in *Locomotion* spraying oil at them actually kills them – although only temporarily as they soon re-spawn on another part of the screen.

As mentioned, despite the different theme and graphics, nearly


» [VTech] When you complete a stage you get a nice animation of the completed train rolling off the screen.



> **"Much like BurgerTime, you climb the platforms to walk over the various parts and watch them drop to form the engine below"**





» [VTech] Game over man, game over!



» [VTech] Before you start a stage you get to see what the finished train will look like.


» [VTech] Stop!… Hammer time!

all the core gameplay elements remain the same. Of course, this is no bad thing as we at **Retro Gamer** have always been huge fans of *BurgerTime* in its various forms. The game has seen numerous remakes, sequels and even more clones, which is testament to the continued popularity of the title. There is no doubting that of these clones, *Locomotion* is one of the best. The attractive graphics and sound give the game a lot of charm. The gameplay is challenging, while fair, and the controls are spot on. While there is no game out there that really defines the CreatiVision or makes the console a must-have item in your collection, there are a decent amount of titles that remain fun to play, and of these, *Locomotion* stands up as the prime example.

IN DEPTH



TRAIN'S A-COMING
■ When you complete a stage in *Locomotive* you get a nice animation of the completed train rolling off the screen with its valuable cargo in tow.

WHAT A COMPLETE TOOL!
■ The enemies chasing round the screen are a bunch of tools! Yes, they really are! Hammers, spanners and drills all want to stop you in your tracks.

DISTINCTIVE
■ The black background makes it seem like all the levels take place at night. But your bright red helmet and the lush green trees do brighten up the surroundings somewhat.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE
■ Before you start a stage, you get to see what the locomotive should look like. Then the evil tools will wreck it for you to put back together.

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



BURGERTIME
INTELLIVISION

■ The first official home version of the Data East coin-op to be released, the Intellivision translation is still one of the best out there. The Mattel machine was also lucky enough to receive a conversion of the more obscure sequel, *Diner*, too. There is also very good homebrew remake of *BurgerTime* on the machine, titled *Super Chef BT*.



BEEF DROP
ATARI 7800

■ Also released for the Atari 8-bit range of computers and Atari 5200, *Beef Drop* is an excellent homebrew take on the classic game by Ken Siders. Featuring all-new levels and variable difficulty, this remains one of the best versions out there. It's also one of only a few 7800 games to feature a POKEY chip for improved sound and music.



BURGER MAN
ATARI ST

■ This rather odd *BurgerTime* clone for the Atari ST by Byte Back swaps out the diner for a brightly coloured construction site! The plot is some nonsense about trying to retrieve your lunch, but the idea is the same. Unfortunately it doesn't play the same, as the slow unresponsive controls make you think that somebody poured too much cement.

Minority Report

POLICE JUMP

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH ■ YEAR: 1982

■ **Donkey Kong was not only one of the very first platform games, but also the title that put Nintendo, and its soon-to-be mascot Mario, on the map.** So, with the huge success of that game came a multitude of clones, including this one. Swap out the infamous ape for a burly prisoner and replace Mario with a cop and you have *Police Jump*. The look of the game actually very much reminded us of *Fix-It Felix Jr*, the game featured in the excellent *Wreck It Ralph*. Just like the fictitious coin-op in that movie, *Police Jump* keeps on scrolling up to the top of a building, rather than having separate screens. Did somebody at Disney own a CreatiVision as a kid? Who knows for sure, but what we do know is that *Police Jump* is a rather spiffing take on the Nintendo arcade classic and one that provides the player with some great platforming action. The graphics are colourful and well animated – we especially like the way the criminal climbs the building – and the sound effects suit the game perfectly. Our only complaint is that the jumping is a little floaty, but you soon get used to it.

» [Vtech] It's a *Donkey Kong* clone, but it's a good one.

MORE GAMES TO PLAY



» MOUSE PUZZLE

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1982

■ **Released in 1982,** Konami's *Loco-Motion* was one of the very first examples of an arcade puzzle game. The only official ports of the addictive title were for the MSX and Intellivision, so discovering *Mouse Puzzle* was a nice surprise. The idea is simple: to keep the mouse in the maze as long as possible by sliding around the squares in sequence. You can collect the various items for extra bonus points too.



» STONE AGE

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1984

■ **Most of the** people reading this should remember Sega's excellent *Pengo*, a cute block-pushing arcade game that was one of the first big hits for the Japanese giant. Well, as you've already guessed, *Stone Age* is VTech's take on that concept. Replace the penguin with a caveman and the ice with boulders and you basically have the very same game. Push the blocks to splat the monsters and don't get caught!



» SONIC INVADER

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1982

■ **The first part** of the name is a bit odd (and nothing to do with a certain hedgehog), but the second part is a dead giveaway of what to expect here. Taito's iconic *Space Invaders* has found its way to just about every platform under the sun in one shape or another and the CreatiVision is no exception. *Sonic Invader* is one of the best-looking examples of the game we have seen on an 8-bit console and plays very well too.



» WIMBLEDON TENNIS

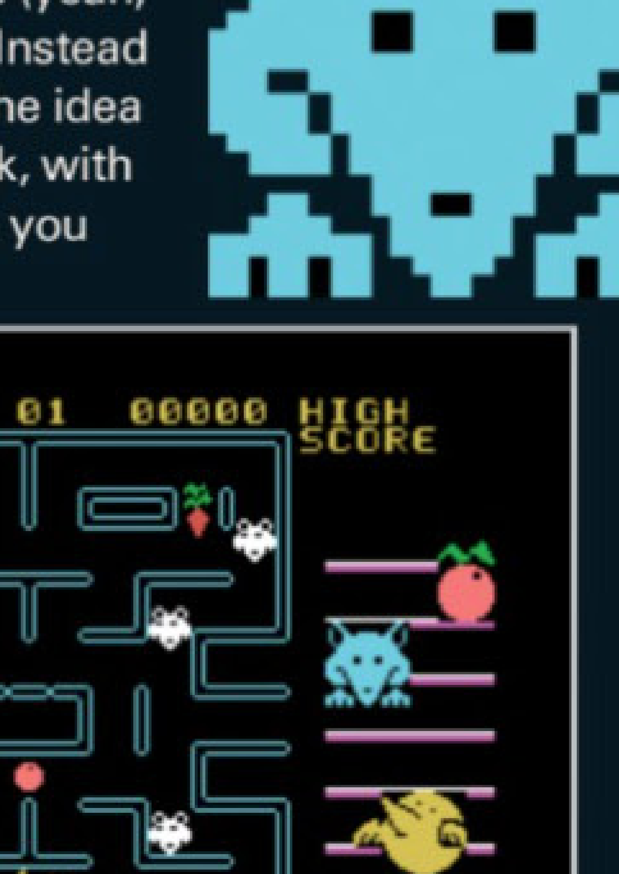
■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1981

■ **One of the** earliest games produced for the system, *Wimbledon Tennis* is very reminiscent of the similarly titled *Tennis* for the Atari 2600 by Activision and that is no bad thing. What we have here is a very playable take on the summer sport that provides everything except the strawberries and cream! The 3D-style view looks fantastic and the game really comes into its own when you add a second player.

CRAZY CHICKY

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **Also known as *Crazy Chicken*, this title has an interesting story behind it.** Originally released as *Crazy Pucker* (yes really!) in 1982, the game was little more than a straight copy of Namco's *Pac-Man*. Having already sued several other people for ripping off its game, Namco jumped on VTech too, causing the Hong Kong-based company to withdraw *Crazy Pucker* from sale and rejig it. The result was *Crazy Chicky*, which can best be described as *Pac-Man* in reverse. The pizza-shaped hero has been replaced with a chicken, the ghosts with foxes and the power pills with carrots (yeah, we don't know either). Instead of munching the dots the idea is now to put them back, with the foxes trying to stop you doing so. Grabbing a carrot turns the tables and allows you to peck them to oblivion, in just the same way as *Pac-Man*. The gameplay change is an interesting one, certainly not one we had encountered before, and adds a nice twist to a well-trodden formula. *Crazy Chicky* is a great-looking arcade game for the CreatiVision that is only let down slightly by the weedy sound effects.



» [Vtech] Adding dots to the screen makes for a rather interesting gameplay twist.

» [Vtech] If you listen very carefull you can hear the sound of Namco's lawyers.

RETRO STINKER

» SOCCER

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH ■ YEAR: 1983

■ **At first glance,** *Soccer* looks great with bright colours and well-defined sprites. Sadly, it sucks as you desperately try to boot the ball around a pitch seemingly covered in treacle. Even the two-player mode fails to add any thrills.



» ASTRO PINBALL

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1982

■ **A lot of** early pinball games on home consoles failed to satisfy. Whether it was because of dodgy physics or strangely designed tables (see *Video Pinball* on the Atari 2600), most of them couldn't recreate the thrills of a real machine. While not perfect, *Astro Pinball* does a pretty good job of doing this. The game is certainly helped by the attractive graphics that once again show what a capable machine the CreatiVision is.



» PLANET DEFENDER

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1981

■ **The name really** is a dead giveaway on this one, *Planet Defender* shares a lot in common with the similarly titled Williams arcade classic. Where the game does differ is that it's all about shooting the enemies – there are no pesky humanoids to rescue or worry about. Interestingly, it was later completely re-skinned and re-released as *Deep Sea Adventure*, the exact same game with a nautical theme.



» TANK ATTACK

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1981


■ ***Combat* was the** game originally bundled with Atari's bestselling VCS console and introduced many people to the world of videogames. So it's only natural that VTech would seek to make its own version for its fledgling console. This two-player tank battle features some gorgeous scenery that certainly sets it apart from Atari's game (and the original *Tank* coin-op on which it was based). Fortunately, it's every bit as fun as well.



» CHOPPER RESCUE

■ DEVELOPER: VTECH
■ YEAR: 1984

■ **One of the** last games released for the system by VTech, *Chopper Rescue* is probably the most technically impressive. Using an isometric perspective, it borrows heavily from Sega's arcade classic *Zaxxon*. You fly your chopper over the enemy city, trying to avoid the skyscrapers and birds while collecting the precious fuel. The colours are a bit strange, but the smooth scrolling and fast pace impress.



THE KING OF FIGHTERS

20TH ANNIVERSARY

Nick Thorpe looks back at how SNK combined two hit fighting games into one of the genre's leading names

Today, it seems like every publisher is involved in a crossover project of some kind, and most of them involve fighting. Capcom's brawlers have fought just about everybody on the planet, half the *Virtua Fighter* cast has invaded the *Dead Or Alive* series, and you can even arrange a four-way scrap between Mario, Sonic, Pac-Man and Mega Man. With this proliferation of inter-brand fisticuffs, it's easy to become blasé about the whole concept. However, 20 years ago it was the hottest new idea in fighting games.

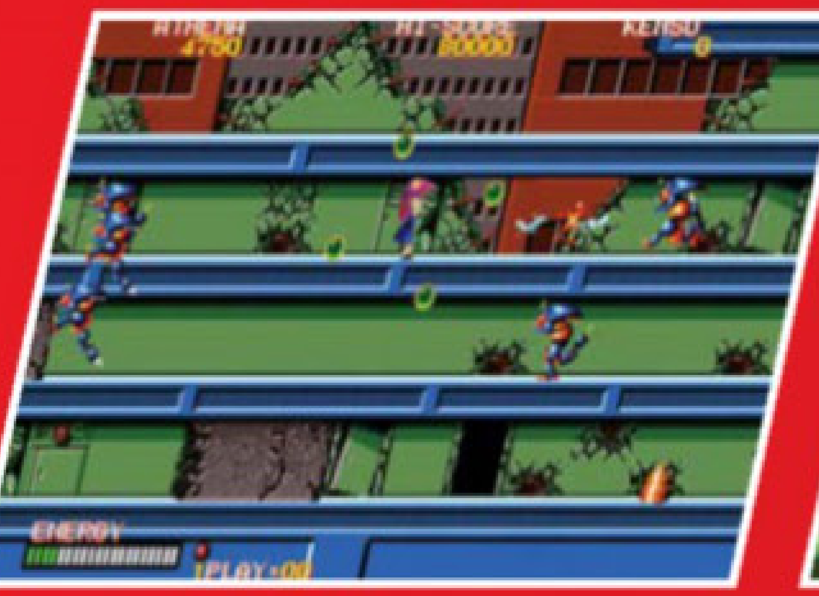
It all began with SNK's *Fatal Fury* series. The original *Fatal Fury* was designed by Takashi Nishiyama, who intended to make a spiritual sequel to *Street Fighter*, which had been his final game at Capcom. Unbeknown to Nishiyama, Capcom was working on an actual sequel in the form of *Street Fighter II*, which would spearhead a boom in competitive fighting games. *Fatal Fury* was a success and SNK quickly became a key competitor in the fighting game market in order to capitalise on the boom, introducing the *Art Of Fighting* series in 1992 and *Samurai Shodown* in 1993.

Throughout 1993, the *Fatal Fury* and *Art Of Fighting* series were drawn together. *Fatal Fury Special*, an upgraded version of *Fatal Fury 2*, added *Art Of Fighting*'s protagonist Ryo Sakazaki as a special 'dream match' opponent for players who cleared the game without losing a round. Meanwhile, the SNES conversion of *Art Of Fighting* expanded on the arcade game's ending, confirming the involvement of *Fatal Fury* antagonist Geese Howard as the mastermind behind the kidnapping which is central to the game's plot. ▶

KOF 20 YEARS

FIGHTER'S HISTORY

Just where do King Of Fighters competitors come from?



PSYCHO SOLDIER

■ Psycho Soldier *is a spiritual sequel to SNK's earlier game* Athena*, which features psychic buddies Athena Asamiya and Sie Kensou running along platforms blasting enemies with their powers. In* The King Of Fighters *series, Athena and Kensou are introduced as team-mates alongside mentor Chin Gentsai as Team China.*

IKARI WARRIORS

■ *SNK's famous shoot-'em-up is a clear riff on* Commando*, which set itself apart from its inspiration with a rotating joystick. The game gave us Ralf Jones and Clark Still, who debuted as fighters alongside commanding officer Heidern in 1994. Later, they'd gain fellow soldiers Leona and Whip as partners.*



FATAL FURY

■ *As one of the key games that went into* The King Of Fighters *formula, the* Fatal Fury *series contributed five characters to the first game. Characters from the series are still being added as years go by, with Hwa Jai only making his debut in* The King Of Fighters XIII.



ART OF FIGHTING

■ *As the other key game in* The King Of Fighters *crossover, the* Art Of Fighting *series also contributed five characters to the roster of* The King Of Fighters 94*. Three more characters from the series were added over the next two games, but no more have been introduced since 1996.*

1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992

With the two series becoming ever closer, the decision to put together a full-blown rumble between the casts of each game seems like an obvious one, but it wasn't what SNK initially came up with. The original crossover design was for a scrolling beat-'em-up in the style of *Final Fight* named *Survivor*, with *Art Of Fighting*'s Robert Garcia and *Fatal Fury*'s Terry Bogard the first characters considered for inclusion. Ultimately, this idea was scrapped and reworked into a more traditional fighting game based around the King Of Fighters tournament introduced in *Fatal Fury*.

The King Of Fighters 94 was a fighting game much like the many others that followed in the wake of *Street Fighter II*, with a few key differences. The most important by far was the introduction of the team battle system. Instead of picking a single character and fighting in best-of-three matches, you'd pick a team of three fighters and compete in best-of-five matches. However, the winner of a round didn't regain their whole health bar as in other games – they'd only regain a small portion, ensuring that the defeated player's effort didn't go to waste. Additionally, an evasive move was added – by pressing both Light Attack buttons at the same time, the player could sidestep an attack before stepping back in for a good hit.

Each three-person team in *The King Of Fighters 94* was fixed, which meant that fighters couldn't be mixed and matched to the player's choosing, and centred around a theme. Terry Bogard, Andy Bogard and Joe Higashi formed a team of *Fatal Fury* fighters, while Ryo Sakazaki, Robert Garcia and Takuma Sakazaki did the same for *Art Of Fighting*. The women's team bundled *Fatal Fury*'s Mai Shiranui with *Art Of Fighting* characters King and Yuri Sakazaki, while the Korean team saw *Fatal Fury*'s Kim Kaphwan attempting to rehabilitate criminal newcomers Chang and Choi. Two other teams drew upon characters from past SNK games *Ikari Warriors* and *Psycho Soldier*, and there was an American team loosely based on SNK's sports games such as *Touchdown Fever* and *Street Hoop*.



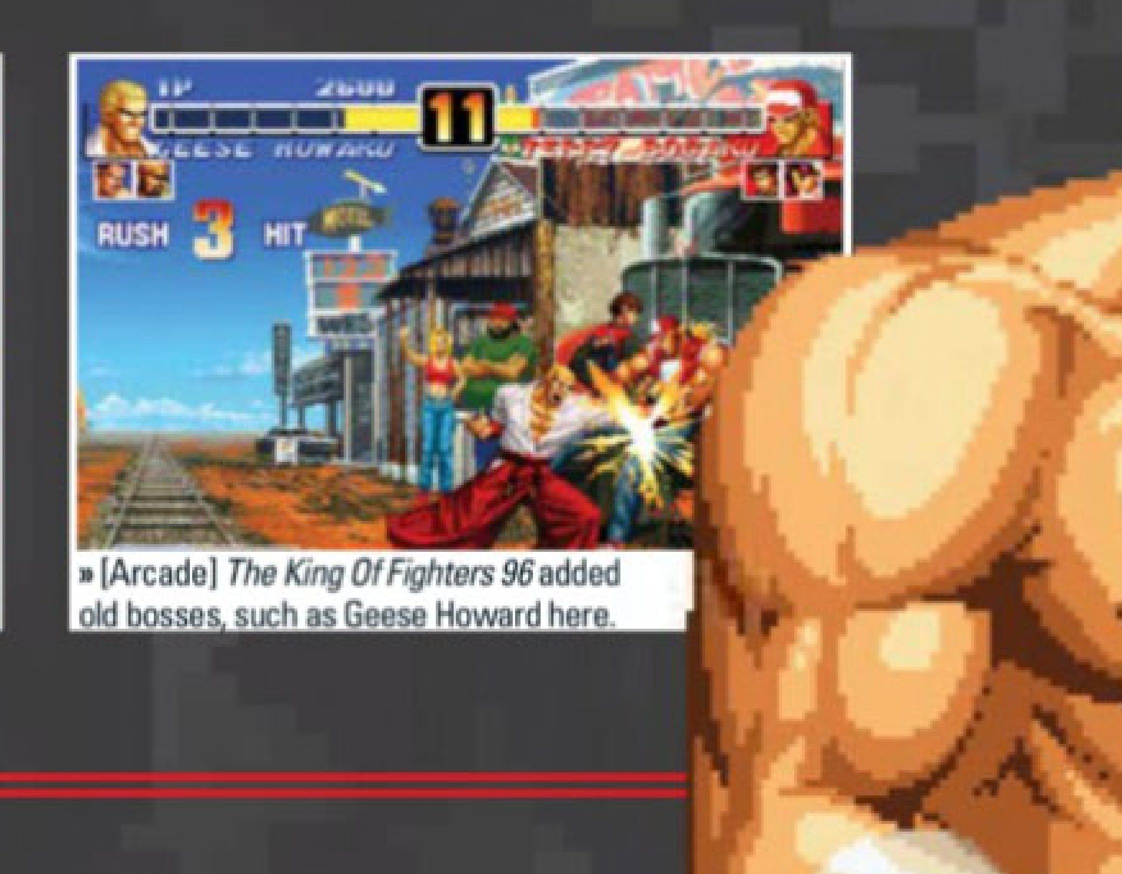
» [Arcade] New hero Kyo wields his characteristic flame powers against Ikari Team member Clark.

However, the most important team was the Japanese one, comprised of three new characters – flame-wielding Kyo Kusanagi, lightning-fisted ladies' man Benimaru Nikaido and the enormous judo practitioner Goro Daimon. SNK's fighting games had come to feature plot more prominently than those of their rivals, often including between-round cut-scenes to advance the game's story, and SNK designated these three newcomers as the heroes of the game. They were designed to draw in a new, younger audience – particularly Kyo, who is only a high-school student – and provided a neat way to avoid promoting one of the crossover properties above the other.

Of course, heroes need a villain to rally against. With the likes of Geese Howard and Wolfgang Krauser, SNK had already gained a fearsome reputation for creating



» [Arcade] The clashes between *Art Of Fighting* and *Fatal Fury* characters were the big draw for 1994.



» [Arcade] *The King Of Fighters 96* added old bosses, such as Geese Howard here.



SAMURAI SHODOWN

■ Samurai Shodown *hasn't contributed any characters to main series games, but Nakoruru appears in the Game Boy version of* The King Of Fighters 95 *and Hanzo Hattori shows up in* The King Of Fighters: Maximum Impact 2. *Haohmaru aooears in the non-fighting spin-off* Quiz King Of Fighters.



METAL SLUG

■ *The run-and-gun classic has provided only one character to* The King Of Fighters, *with Fio making an appearance in* The King Of Fighters: Maximum Impact 2. *However,* King Of Fighters *characters can also scrap with Marco and Mars people in the other all-SNK crossover fighting game,* NeoGeo Battle Coliseum.

KIZUNA ENCOUNTER

■ *Protagonist Sho Hayate and antagonist Jyazu finally escaped the confines of this early tag team fighting game in time for* The King Of Fighters XI, *where both appear as hidden mid-bosses. Another character, King Lion, makes a cameo appearance as King's alternate Striker in* The King Of Fighters 2000.



BURIKI ONE

■ *This mixed martial arts fighting game is frequently overlooked, largely due to the fact that it was an arcade-only release on SNK's unpopular Hyper Neo Geo 64 board. Previously Takuma's alternate Striker, Gai Tendo makes his debut alongside final boss Silver as a hidden mid-boss in* The King Of Fighters XI.



1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999

tough bosses and Rugal Bernstein was designed to be the toughest of the lot. Taking moves from both of the aforementioned bosses and adding his own signatures such as the Genocide Cutter kicking combo, he was a force to be reckoned with. He'd also seemingly killed Kyo's dad Saisyu, providing the necessary motivation for Kyo to give him the most thorough kicking imaginable.

Despite the game's various strengths, hype for *The King Of Fighters 94* was slow to build. When the game first went out on location test, only ten players showed up. Fortunately for SNK, word of mouth saw the game's later tests attracting long queues of players and by the time the coin-op was released, it was a genuine hit for the company. It's not hard to see why, since many of the traits that have made *The King Of Fighters* series so popular were established early on. The chance to pit fighters from different series against one another was a big draw, while the team battle dynamic quickly caught on with players and was later adopted by some other series as a result. Even the incredibly difficult boss battle had some appeal.

> "The chance to pit fighters from different series against one another was a big draw"

Having seen the success of the first game, SNK quickly put *The King Of Fighters 95* into production, beginning the trend of annual sequels that persisted for the series' first decade. As before, eight teams of three characters waded into battle, seven of which returned from the first game, but this time the Team Edit mode allowed players to create their own custom teams. This drastically increased the number of potential match-ups and became the default mode for future games in the series.

The new team replaced the American sports one and was designed to act as an antagonistic force against the game's major teams. Established antagonists Billy Kane and Eiji Kisaragi were pulled in from *Fatal Fury* and *Art Of Fighting* respectively, in order to fight alongside Kyo's new rival Iori Yagami. Sporting unusual looks and moves designed to stand out from the crowd, Iori became an instant series mainstay due to his popularity with fans and his importance to the series' plot. Though that trio was the only new team, it wasn't the sole source of new characters, as Saisyu Kusanagi was added to the game as a mid-boss late in development.

He wasn't dead as the previous game had implied, but instead brainwashed by *The King Of Fighters 95*'s main villain – Omega Rugal, who had also survived his apparent death at the end of the previous game and become a cyborg, complete with a mysterious new power.

The next two games developed the series further, adding popular characters and new systems. *The King Of Fighters 96* introduced the tactical roll, a handy technique allowing players to pass through projectiles and escape when cornered, as well as a team comprised of bosses – Geese Howard, Wolfgang Krauser and Mr Big. The next year, *The King Of Fighters 97* wrapped up the ▶



» [Arcade] Leona has become a series mainstay following her debut as part of the 1996 Ikari Team.



» [Arcade] Most stages feature ambient background noise in *KOF 97*, but a few fighters retain theme music.

» [Arcade] The popular New Faces team from 1997, including Yashiro here, has rarely been used for storyline reasons.



KOF 20 YEARS

SPIN-OFF KNEE DROP

The classic combatants leave their comfort zone



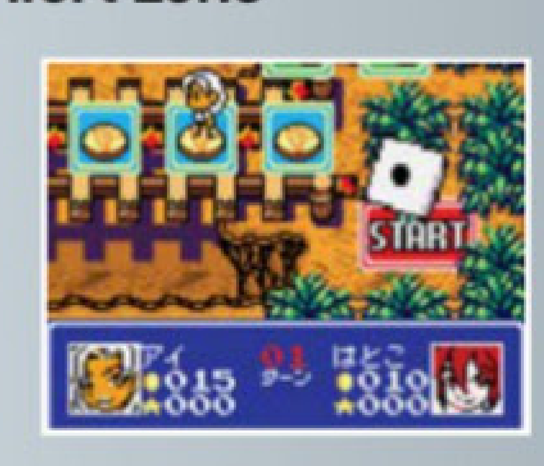
QUIZ KING OF FIGHTERS 1995

■ This arcade quiz title allows you to play as various *KOF* and *Samurai Shodown* characters, then challenge others in quiz battles in a quest to save serial kidnap victim Yuri Sakazaki. The arcade, Neo-Geo AES and Neo-Geo CD versions are all in Japanese only, unfortunately.



THE KING OF FIGHTERS: KYO 1998

■ Released exclusively for the PlayStation in Japan, this visual novel follows the story from Kyo's perspective and involves some turn-based battles. It greatly expands on character relationships from the fighting games. It also features a karaoke showdown between Iori and Kyo…



THE KING OF FIGHTERS: BATTLE DE PARADISEO 2000

■ This Neo-Geo Pocket Color release is a mini-game compilation tied together by a central board game. An English language release for this game was planned, but cancelled due to SNK's sudden withdrawal from international markets in June 2000.



CAPCOM VS SNK: MILLENNIUM FIGHT 2000 2000

■ While there have been a few Capcom/SNK crossovers, this one is worth highlighting. Every single member of the SNK side has been playable in *The King Of Fighters* series – though we're cheating slightly by including Nakoruru, a Game Boy bonus character.



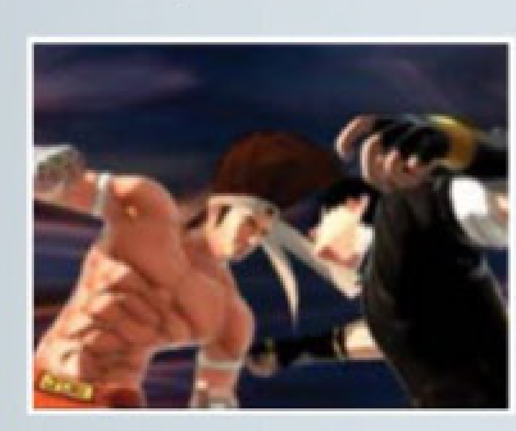
DAYS OF MEMORIES 2005

■ It's just what everyone wanted: a *King Of Fighters* dating sim! A Japan-only release, for mobile phones, it spawned a lengthy series and Nintendo DS compilation packages. The first game allows you to date Athena, Kasumi, B Jenet, King, Mai, Yuri, Leona and Kula.



KOF SKY STAGE 2010

■ Originally available in arcades and later released via Xbox Live Arcade, it's one of the few *King Of Fighters* spin-offs to have been officially released outside of Japan. The bizarre genre choice of bullet hell shoot-'em-up is the most remarkable thing about this rather average game.



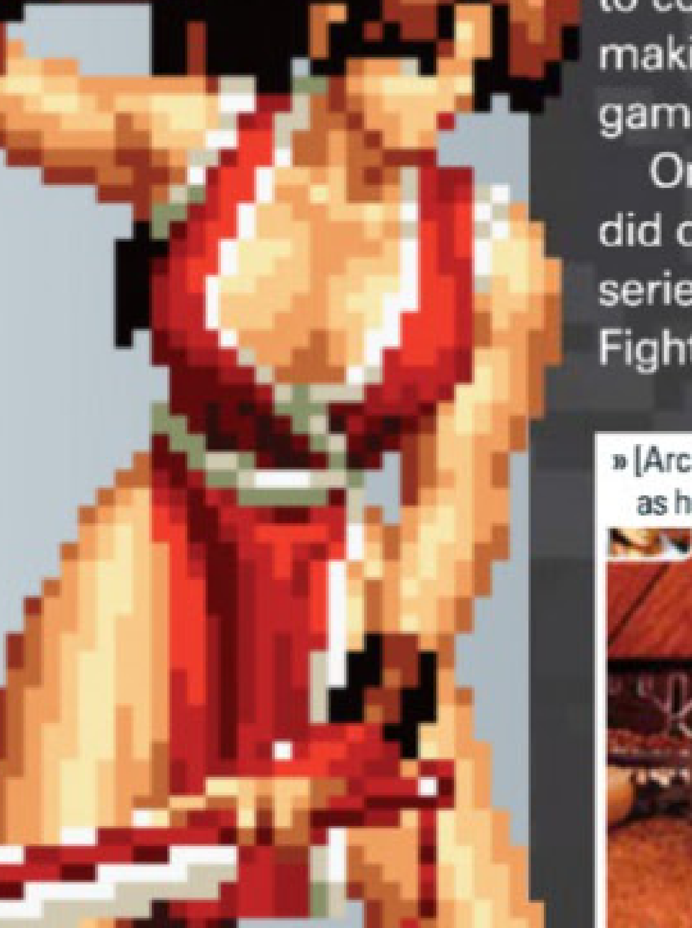
THE KING OF FIGHTERS ONLINE 2013

■ Originally conceived as an online scrolling beat-'em-up back in 2009, it finally emerged as a MOBA, using the template popularised by the likes of *League Of Legends*. Despite only running in Thailand, the game seems to have acquired a small but loyal following.



THE RHYTHM OF FIGHTERS 2014

■ This rhythm-action release for iOS and Android takes a sprinkling of *Cool Cool Toon*'s gameplay, plucks characters and backgrounds from *The King Of Fighters* series and other SNK games and adds a big dollop of classic SNK music. We awarded it 90% in issue 133.





» [Arcade] K9999 resembled *Akira* character Tetsuo Kaneda and disappeared from the series after only two games.

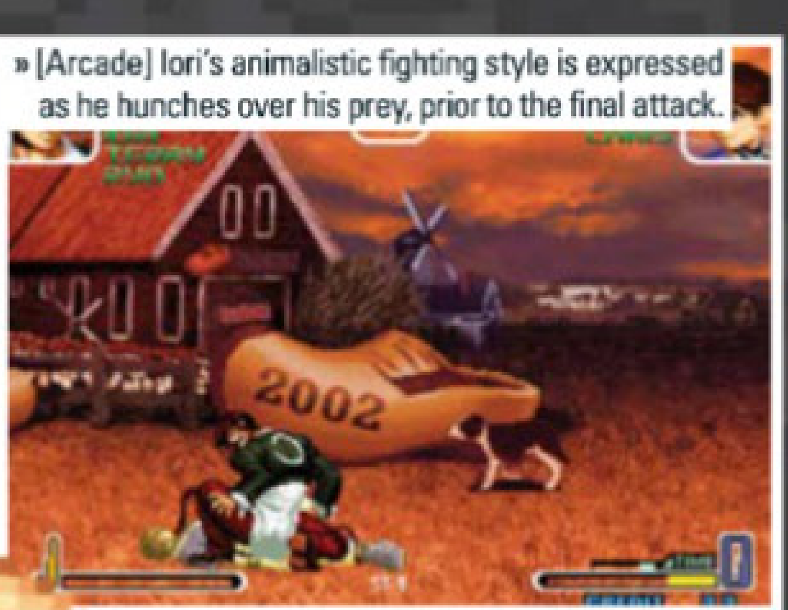
Orochi story and added fan-voted characters Ryuji Yamazaki, Billy Kane and Blue Mary alongside Orochi's servants. The addition of a super bar which charged automatically (as in *Street Fighter* games) rather than manually was popular, though the ambient background music was an experiment not to be repeated.

However, the high point of the early years – in fact, the game many would argue is the high point of the series overall – is *The King Of Fighters 98*. Wrapping up the first era of *The King Of Fighters*, the game brings together the majority of characters from the first four titles in a new Dream Match format, allowing for fights that wouldn't be possible in any other game in the series. The lack of storyline in the Dream Match format allowed SNK to bring back dead or otherwise retired characters. Without the need to create new characters, the developers were free to concentrate on the game balance, making for the most finely tuned game of the series to that point.

One of the key things that SNK did during the first five games in the series was to keep the changes big. Fighting games are notorious for being updated frequently, with only minor changes to the core game in each new iteration, but *The King Of Fighters* offered a largely new experience each year. Where other developers might spend three or four years continuously upgrading a single game, SNK ensured that the plot continued to move forward, backgrounds and music were changed, and entirely new matches were possible. It was still an iterative process, as the long-serving sprites from *The King Of Fighters 96* would show in later editions, but SNK managed to keep its games feeling fresh.

> **"Unlike rivals, The King Of Fighters offered a largely new experience each year"**

When *The King Of Fighters 99* resumed the story, it marked the beginning of a new era for the series, one which would prove tumultuous and somewhat controversial for a variety of reasons. The new plot was centred on the NESTS corporation, which planned to conquer the world by creating unbeatable super fighters, using data obtained through the King Of Fighters tournaments. The new protagonist, escaped test subject K', had experience of NESTS' mean sideline in kidnapping and genetic



» [Arcade] Iori's animalistic fighting style is expressed as he hunches over his prey, prior to the final attack.



» [Arcade] *The King Of Fighters 2001* is a large step back from its predecessors in visual terms.

experimentation thanks to his infusion with Kyo Kusanagi's DNA. Initially, the development team had planned to drop Kyo and Iori in order to focus attention on the new protagonist, but later relented and merely had them disappear for a year during *The King Of Fighters 99* – and even then, both were included as hidden characters.

The common gameplay element that distinguishes releases of this era is the Striker system. Each team now consisted of four characters, but the fights were still three-on-three affairs – the fourth fighter was designated as a Striker, who could be called in to interfere in the match a limited number of times. Each had different effects – some would throw projectiles, others would attempt to grab the opponent and some would just taunt. This system was refined in *The King Of Fighters 2000* to include alternative Strikers for each character, and further altered for *The King Of Fighters 2001* to allow the player to choose the composition of their team – from one to four fighters, with up to three remaining characters used as Strikers.

During the NESTS era, another curious trend took hold as the crossover roots of the series were largely abandoned. While many of the game's *Fatal Fury* and *Art Of Fighting* characters were retained, *The King Of Fighters 99* added just one character from another SNK game – *Real Bout Fatal Fury 2*'s Li Xiangfei. That was one more than either *2000* or *2001*, both of which only introduced original characters to the series. These new additions were aimed at diversifying the cast, providing unusual characters like Hinako Shijo, a small girl who used sumo techniques, and characters which appealed to certain markets, such as Mexican wrestler Ramon and South Korean heroine May Lee.

It's arguable that this was when the series stepped out of the shadow of its crossover origins, as it was chosen ahead of *Fatal Fury* and *Art Of Fighting* for the Neo-Geo Pocket launch and its own original characters were taking part in crossover fights of their own in games like *Capcom Vs SNK*. However, it's also when the series was closest to fading from the spotlight, as it was during this era that SNK experienced major financial trouble. The company was acquired by Aruze in January 2000 and entered something of a death spiral soon after – just months before the release of *The King Of Fighters 2000*, SNK withdrew from markets outside of Japan. The company was dying and founder Eikichi Kawasaki could see the writing on the wall, leaving to form new firms Playmore and Brezzasoft in August 2001. SNK ultimately filed for bankruptcy in October 2001, mere weeks before the release of *The King Of Fighters 2001*.



» [Arcade] Long-serving characters like Terry Bogard received a visual update for *The King Of Fighters 2003*.

Whereas the previous game hadn't shown signs of the financial pressure, the *2001* entry has achieved notoriety among fans for its poor music, bland backgrounds and unusual illustration style. SNK staff have spoken in interviews about how low staffing levels ensured that the game's development was a major struggle. Luckily, *The King Of Fighters 2002* offered a chance to go back to basics, returning to the Dream Match formula of 1998 and the Striker-free battles of old. Though the development staff consisted of series veterans, both releases were produced by Korean company Eolith as Kawasaki was busy rebuilding Playmore into a successor to SNK, eventually acquiring the name and intellectual property rights needed to do so. With things back in order, the series could proceed once more.

The third era of *The King Of Fighters* was one marked by major changes. Another new storyline was introduced, centred on villainous protagonist Ash Crimson and his quest to steal the powers of those who had sealed Orochi – Kyo, Iori and Chizuru. The era began with *The King Of Fighters 2003* ditching the traditional team bouts in favour of three-on-three tag team matches in which fighters could freely swap places mid-match, creating fights with a faster pace and a more chaotic feel. Many ▶

Q&A: RYAN HART

We talk to the legendary fighting game player and two-time UK King Of Fighters champion



What made early games in* The King of Fighters *series stand out in the Nineties?

It was the only fighting game franchise to fully capture the attention of the competitive Street Fighter *population, which had all the numbers at the time.* The King of Fighters *had enough similarities to* Street Fighter, *so the relation was there. However, it had tons more to offer, plus unique system content we'd never seen; this made it very appealing.*

What do you feel was the high point of the series, and why?

In the UK, the high point of the series was definitely during The King Of Fighters 98 *as this version had the most players at the arcade. Fighting games had generally become a lot more technical by this time. Capcom had released its* Street Fighter Alpha *series and* Tekken 2 *was also really technical – playing* King Of Fighters *wasn't much of a stretch, so more and more players got involved.*

This was also the first time we had a lot of international talent showing up in the UK from all over the world. This encouraged the UK community to get more competitive and this fuelled players to play the game more and join in the fun.

Why do you think* The King Of Fighters *series has never achieved the same popularity as the likes of* Street Fighter *and* Tekken*?

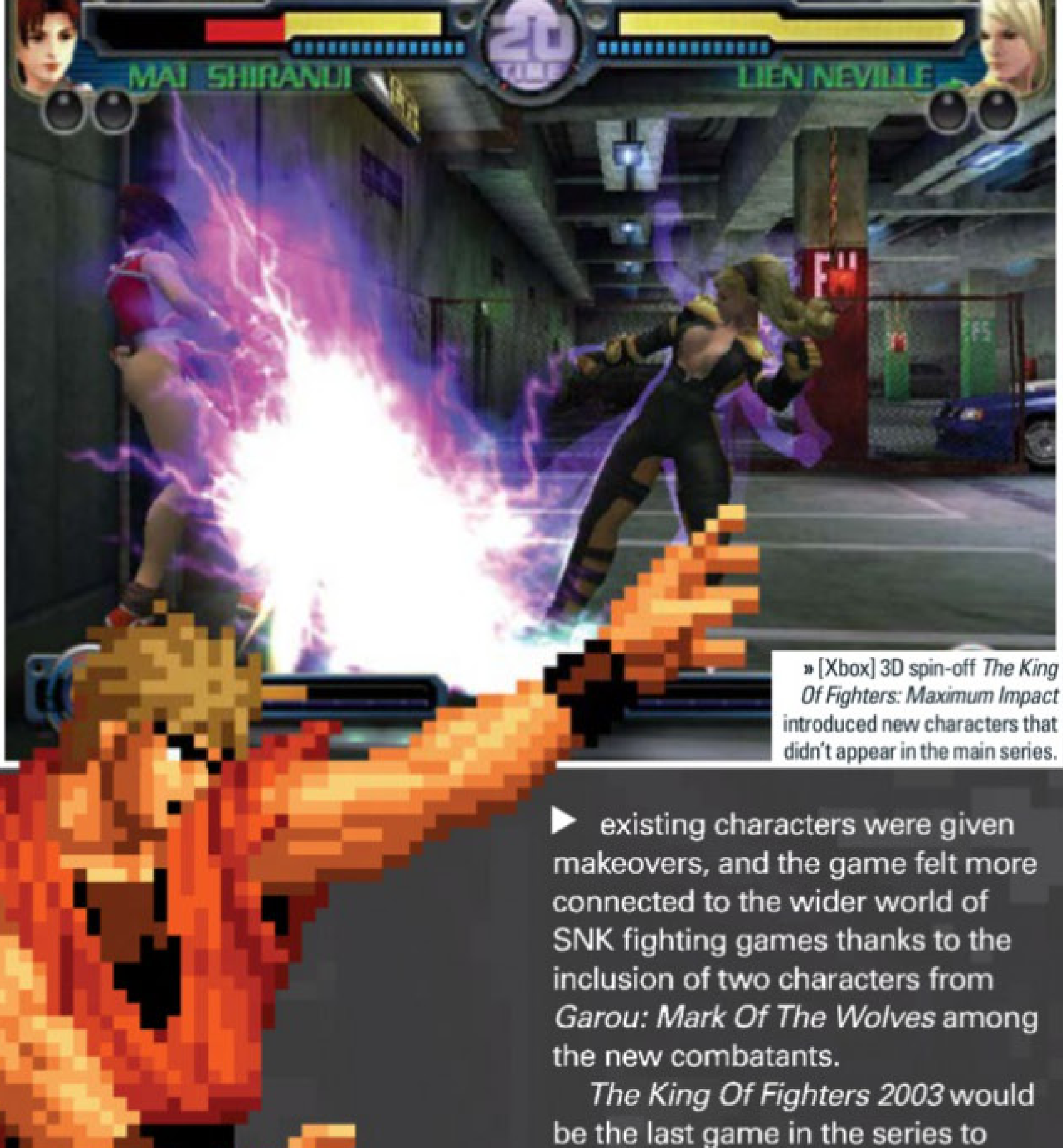
I'd say it's partially the technical barriers and quirky anime style, but it's also due to accessibility: Tekken *and* Street Fighter *were available absolutely everywhere whereas* King Of Fighters *was scarcely scattered around in London arcades.* Tekken *and* Street Fighter *were both available on popular consoles during the Nineties, which heavily boosted their popularity. If you wanted* The King Of Fighters *outside of a few arcade spots, you had to buy a whole Neo-Geo AES console and then be prepared to fork out £200-£300 per cartridge.*

Why does* The King Of Fighters XIII *remain a fixture at tournaments?

Because The King Of Fighters *is definitely hype to watch at high level, the pace is fast and anything can happen at any time, which relates to the excitement* Ultimate Marvel Vs Capcom 3 *offers.* The King Of Fighters *also has a generally faster pace than* Street Fighter *due to the running and the small jumps. It's definitely a lot more technical than* Street Fighter, *which enhances the experience for players and viewers.*

ROUND 1, SPRITE!





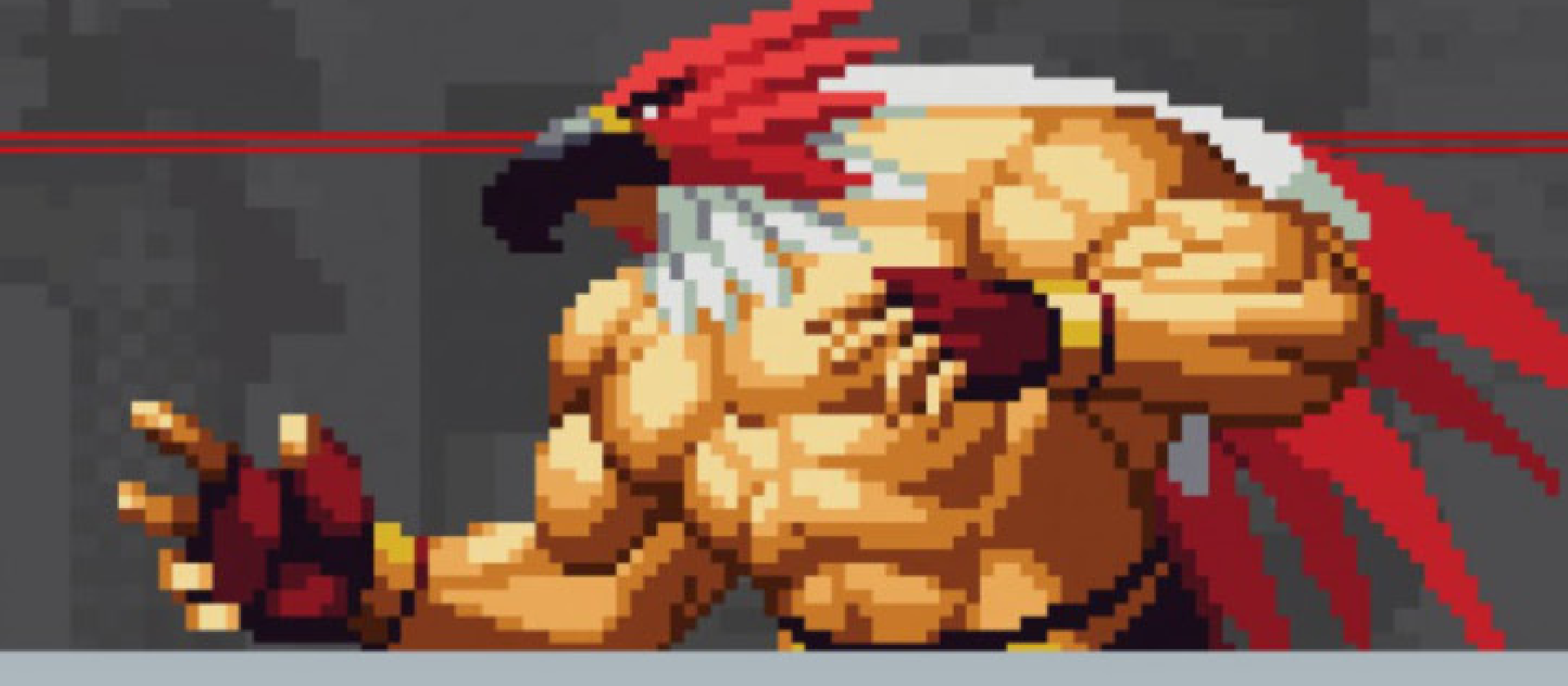
» [Xbox] 3D spin-off *The King Of Fighters: Maximum Impact* introduced new characters that didn't appear in the main series.

▶ existing characters were given makeovers, and the game felt more connected to the wider world of SNK fighting games thanks to the inclusion of two characters from *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* among the new combatants.

The King Of Fighters 2003 would be the last game in the series to include a year in its title, and the last to run on SNK's long-serving Neo-Geo arcade hardware. The latter was simply in need of retirement – partially due to age, but also due to rampant bootlegging of arcade cartridges. As a result, the next game would need to launch on a new platform, and SNK would no longer be able to produce yearly sequels.

The company experimented with a variety of different directions for the series in 2004 – the Dreamcast-based Atomiswave platform was used to produce another Dream Match title in the rather forgettable *The King Of Fighters: Neowave*, while a 3D spin-off game called *The King Of Fighters: Maximum Impact* launched on the PlayStation 2. Additionally, a tenth anniversary remake of *The King Of Fighters 94: Re-Bout* began a new tradition of updating the Dream Match releases, continuing with *The King Of Fighters 98: Ultimate Match* and *The King Of Fighters 2002: Unlimited Match*. Though *Maximum Impact* would achieve some success of its own and gained a sequel, the 2D series would ultimately continue as the dominant approach.

The King Of Fighters XI arrived in 2005. The game put the old low-res sprites on the high-res backgrounds made possible by the Atomiswave hardware, and retained the tag-team action of its predecessor. It was quite a bold release, which dropped series mainstays such as Mai and Leona, but also added a whole load of characters from forgotten SNK fighters like *Buriki One* and *Kizuna Encounter*. However, this new approach ended as soon as it began, as the series moved into the HD era on Taito's Type X2 board.



The entire cast from the major King Of Fighters releases, assembled and ready to rumble

RALF JONES, CLARK STILL, ATHENA ASAMIYA, SIE KENSOU, CHIN GENTSAI, YURI SAKAZAKI, KING, MAI SHIRANUI, HEAVY D!, LUCKY GLAUBER

KASUMI TODOH, MATURE, VICE, GEESE HOWARD, WOLFGANG KRAUSER, MR BIG, CHIZURU KAGURA, GOENITZ, YASHIRO NANAKASE, SHERMIE

JHUN HOON, KRIZALID, RAMON, VANESSA, LIN, SETH, HINAKO SHIJO, KULA DIAMOND, ZERO, K9999

MAKI KAGURA, ADELHEID, MUKAI, OSWALD, ELISABETH BLANCTORCHE, DUCK KING, B JENET, MOMOKO, GAI TENDO, SHO HAYATE

NAMELESS, RAIDEN, HWA JAI, SAIKI

KEY

KOF '94	KOF '99	KOF XI
KOF '95	KOF '00	KOF 02UM
KOF '96	KOF '01	KOF XII
KOF '97	KOF '03	KOF XIII

New technology required another Dream Match, and *The King Of Fighters XII* was the result. Sadly, it was rather below par when it arrived in 2009. It looked utterly beautiful, with gorgeous new HD sprites for every character and backgrounds to match, but it lacked much of what fans have come to expect from *The King Of Fighters*. The roster wasn't arranged into teams and was smaller than that of *The King Of Fighters 94*, even after two characters were added for the console versions. Worse yet, for the first time there was no final boss, turning the game into a simple time attack exercise.

The next year, SNK Playmore made amends with *The King Of Fighters XIII*. Concluding Ash Crimson's story, the game retained the excellent graphics of its predecessor but returned many of the missing elements, such as defined teams and an insane final boss. Despite having a smaller community than some of its rivals, *The King Of Fighters XIII* has proven very popular at the annual Evolution fighting game tournament series – it was the second most-watched game when introduced in 2012 and continues to be played now, as it generates some incredibly exciting matches with enough depth to satisfy professional players.

But it isn't just the tournament scene that enjoys *The King Of Fighters*. Home versions of *The King Of Fighters XIII* include a story mode which adds visual novel-style sequences between fights, an approach which has become more common as fighting game developers seek to broaden the appeal of the genre with games like *Persona 4 Arena* and the *BlazBlue* series. Ultimately, those games are simply playing catch-up – special pre-fight introductions and speech for characters that have notable interactions are just two of the touches that show how SNK's developers have long recognised that fighting game plots didn't have to be throwaway.

Those are the things that keep *The King Of Fighters* series so popular – it has the depth to appeal to serious players and the character to appeal to more casual fighting game fans. As a result, it has now seen more releases than both the *Fatal Fury* and *Art Of Fighting* series combined, and has grown to encompass far more of SNK's historical output. Ultimately, SNK achieved something very rare in videogames by creating a spin-off that has exceeded the popularity of its source material – a series of fighting games that, despite its many contenders, can lay claim to the crown as SNK's premier fighting series. ★



» [PlayStation 2] Despite utilising new hardware allowing higher-res visuals, *KOF XI* stuck with low-res sprites.



» [PlayStation 2] Confusingly, *KOF: Maximum Impact 2* was renamed *The King Of Fighters 2006* in North America.

Future Classic

Modern games you'll still be playing in years to come

INFO

» **Featured System:** PC
» **Year:** 2004
» **Publisher:** Valve
» **Developer:** In-house
» **Key People:** Gabe Newell, co-creator, Viktor Antonov, concept designer, Marc Laidlaw, writer

GO DEEPER

» **The late, great Robin Williams was set to voice a character in the game, but scheduling conflicts prevented him.**

» **The game was infamously leaked a year before its release and distributed illegally over the internet.**



»[PC] Xen bugs always posed a significant challenge, both to yourself and the enemy AI.

46. HALF-LIFE 2

It's considered by many to be Valve's finest hour, but is this really the best game of all time? Dave Scarborough tells you why you should pick up the crowbar and dive into Valve's extraordinary masterpiece

THE BACKGROUND

The difficult second album. Valve set to work just six short months on a sequel to, what is commonly referred to as, the best PC game of all time, *Half-Life* – a first-person shooter that took the rudimentary template of Id Software's *Doom* and imbued it with an emotional edge and cinematic charisma.

Director and Valve co-founder Gabe Newell was not content with just rolling out a quick and dirty sequel that would capitalise on the huge success of the original. Instead, he set out to not only design a follow-up that would honour the values of the original but further push the genre forward, inventing and pioneering mechanics while other developers continued to cower in their comfort zones.

Half-Life 2 would establish Valve's tradition of unscrupulous refinement: major design overhauls mid-development, scrapped levels and characters, and huge innovations in the form of the Source Engine that would power subsequent titles from the studio. It would also establish Valve's other tradition: massive delays. By the time it reached PC gamers in fervent anticipation, it took a team of 84 artists six years to create what is, by far, the quintessence of the first-person shooter.

THE GAME

Who said a first-person shooter just had to be about pulling the trigger? That's the beating pulse that thumps beneath the surface of *Half-Life*. Oh, and what a surface it is. Theoretical-physicist-cum-elite-solider Gordon Freeman is dropped into the oppressive suburbs of City 17, a dystopian setting fully fleshed almost by mere suggestion. Poke your nose around any corner and you'll find some indication of the bigger picture, one that paints desecration and inevitable ruin across the land. Whether it's a simple act of graffiti, the ominous snap of a hovering City Scanner, or even the burning bodies that hang lifelessly from the highway, the game is a triumph in environmental narrative without ever forcing the player's gaze.

What's magnificent about *Half-Life 2*'s direction isn't the pathway by which the game directs you to walk, but where the eye draws you to drag you away from it. The use of abject imagery – particularly of alien architecture


» [PC] While *Half-Life 2* mixed up a lot of the original's design, headcrabs made a horrifying return.

» [PC] The Source Engine enabled a far better cinematic presentation and continued to surprise right through to the game's closing moments.

invading a very human world – is striking, but the sight of a towering Strider asserts the game's ambitions beyond story and offers a hint at the big things to come. Because, let's face it, *Half-Life 2* ain't no slouch in the action department.

Valve creates a veritable playpen of mischief and mayhem and does so with such effortless ease that it never suggests grandstanding on the developer's part, rather just logic: a series of circumstances that culminate in the most punchy and gratifying action sequences in the medium. There are the big moments – a giant robotic dog tackling a helicopter in mid-air; taking on the aforementioned Strider in the city hub; exploring the creepy locale that is Ravenholm – but the smaller ones echo the triumphs of the action and combat just as effectively. It might be something as simple as a flaming red barrel rolling towards a unit of Combine soldiers and sending them skyward on explosion, the ragdoll physics twirling limp bodies across the sky; using organic lures to send alien insects fighting against human adversaries while you sneak around the bloody carnage; or, most likely, it's that first time you got the Gravity Gun, removing that buzzsaw from a wall and sending it flying towards a zombie, slicing it in two. Either way, the versatility and ingenuity is as ever-present and makes it a joy to return to years after it was first released.

It's a game that refused to confine itself to one genre, not sidelining its narrative goals to better suit the shooting, nor did it simply glide over areas that other games simply ignored, such as characterisation – Freeman might be an empty vessel but Alyx, Eli and even Dog are lovingly conceived and become characters you truly care about. Valve didn't just create a memorable game, but an unforgettable one. And given the wide-sweeping impact it has had on games in the ensuring years, it doesn't look like the industry will be forgetting about it anytime soon.

WHY IT'S A FUTURE CLASSIC

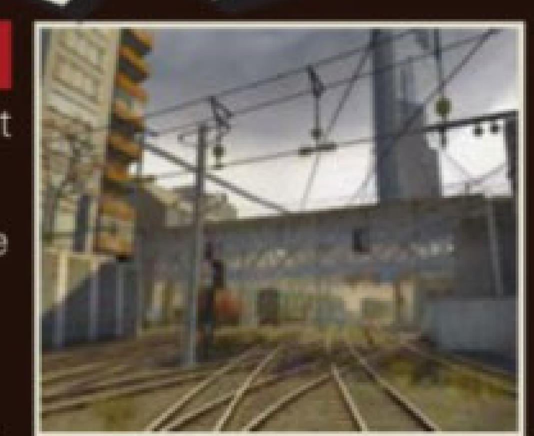
Half-Life 2 is worthy of many accolades, and some might cite its ties with Steam, the method with which it innovated in-game physics using the Gravity Gun, or the advancements in enemy AI. But while those are all testaments to the lasting impact and legacy of the game, it misses the mark when trying to pinpoint why it's such a seminal piece of work.

Whereas a game like *BioShock* may have a couple of choice moments – the opening descent into Rapture or the sight of the Big Daddy arriving on the scene – *Half-Life 2* is crammed full of 'em. It's a parade of memorable set-pieces, immersive storytelling, and places and people that resonate long after the credits have rolled. It refused to be pigeonholed as *just* a shooter. But, when you do finally pull the trigger…well, that's pretty spectacular too. Simply unforgettable. *



Things of note

CITY 17



Created by upcoming concept designer Viktor Antonov, *Half-Life 2*'s most memorable location is a striking vision of a futuristic city torn by subjugation and imperial rule.

THE GRAVITY GUN



Has there been a more satisfying gun in gaming? Use it to lift objects and fire them at your enemy. Not just an effective weapon but a great puzzle mechanic too.

ALYX AND DOG



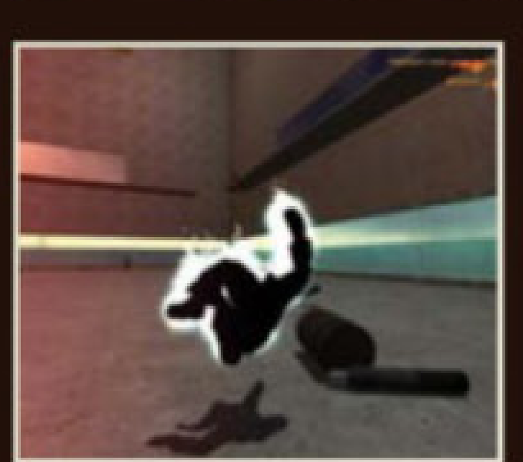
What would *Half-Life 2* be without Gordon's sidekicks? Not only do they provide some real humility, they flesh out Freeman's personality without him uttering a word.

THE EPISODES



Half-Life 2 was meant to herald a new business model from Valve, continuing the story in episodic format. While it stopped after two, you really need to play them.

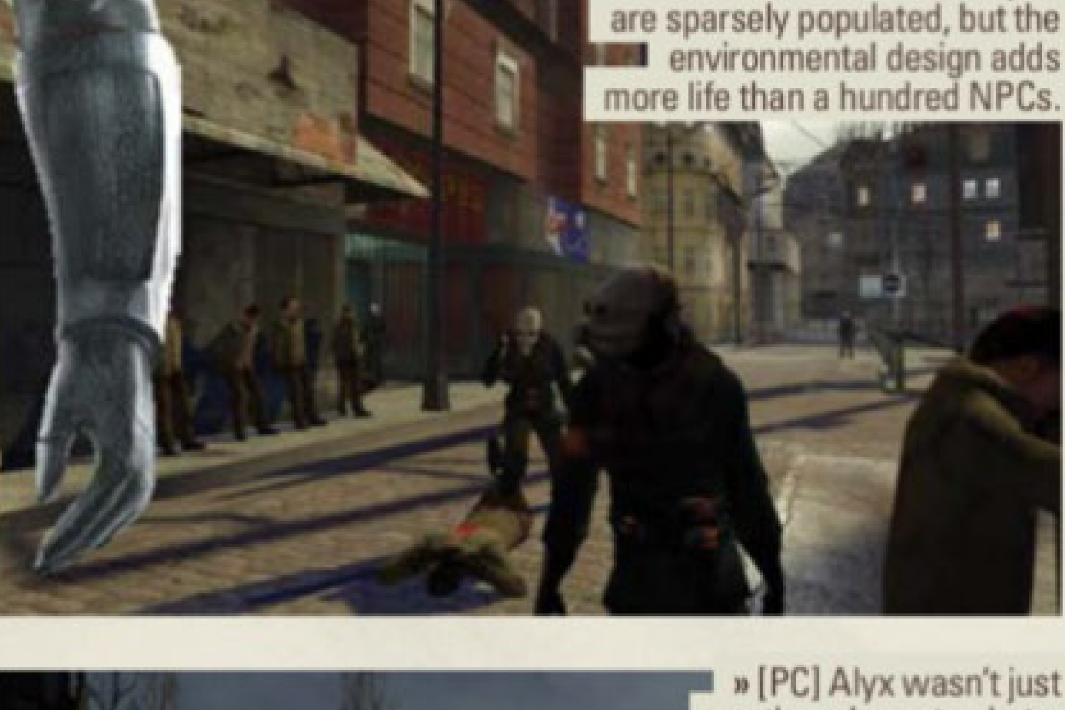
MULTIPLAYER DEATHMATCH



The deathmatch multiplayer mode is simplistic, but the sight of eight people running around firing toilets at each other never gets dull.



» [PC] The vehicle sections were a highlight in *Half-Life 2*, both in terms of action and puzzle solving.


» [PC] The streets of City 17 are sparsely populated, but the environmental design adds more life than a hundred NPCs.


» [PC] Alyx wasn't just another character, but a valuable aid on the battlefield against the Combine.



> "As with other Nintendo games, it's a piece of people's childhoods. Anyone who grew up owning a NES remembers it fondly"
> Jerry Momoda



30 YEARS OF DUCK HUNT

Starring a smarmy dog and scores of hapless flying wildfowl, Duck Hunt was the game that introduced many to the joys of the NES Zapper lightgun. Mike Bevan looks back at the history and enduring appeal of Nintendo's virtual hunting trip

Most gamers of a certain age will almost certainly have played *Duck Hunt*, for one simple reason – it was paired on a pack-in cartridge for the Nintendo Entertainment System along with one of the most popular and groundbreaking console games of all time, *Super Mario Bros*. But while Shigeru Miyamoto's platform classic was undoubtedly the more attention-grabbing title of the compilation, *Duck Hunt* retains the endearing nostalgia of childhood, a cartoon shooting gallery with a sniggering canine companion and the hapless quacks of animated flapping ducks brought down by the simple act of pulling a plastic trigger. The grinning face of *Duck Hunt*'s dog, fresh from rooting around in bushes for nesting gun-fodder, has become an ironic and humorous hallmark for videogaming disappointment after missing your quarry in Nintendo's lightgun shooter. And 30 years on, he's set to make a comeback in the latest instalment of the *Super Smash Bros* fighting game franchise with a feathered friend in tow. It seems all these years later, the ducks are striking back.

Although most people may know *Duck Hunt* from the *Super Mario Bros* compilation cart, it was in fact the debut pack-in title for the North American NES launch in 1985, when it came bundled with *Gyromite*, a platform game that worked with Nintendo's Johnny Five-alike robot R.O.B. Coupled with its later appearance as a pack-in for various NES bundles alongside *Super Mario Bros* and *World Class Track Meet*, that's an awful lot of copies of *Duck Hunt* out in the wild.

Produced by renowned Nintendo designer Gunpei Yokoi, creator of the Game & Watch and Game Boy handheld systems, *Duck Hunt* was in fact a digital reincarnation of his earlier electromechanical toy, a Kôsenjû ('light ray gun') game of the same name. Released in 1976, the product used a small mirror-projection device to project white duck silhouettes onto a wall. The ducks would 'fall', accompanied by a loud quack, ▶



» [Arcade] Sadly there are only ever two ducks on screen at any one time. It's still tricky, mind.

» [NES] One of the modes available allows you to shoot at skeets, instead of the usual ducks.

» [NES] Contrary to popular belief, there are actually three different coloured ducks in *Duck Hunt*.

when the player hit them with the shotgun-shaped lightgun provided. In fact, despite the absence of a pastoral background or your ubiquitous hunting dog, the basic game mechanics were very similar to the future NES version. However, the relatively high retail price of 9,500 yen (around £75 adjusted for inflation) meant it was an expensive novelty back in Seventies Japan.

The version of *Duck Hunt* that most of us are familiar with was launched on the Japanese Famicom console in April, 1984. It was one of three initial titles for Nintendo's new Famicom Beam Gun peripheral, along with the Wild West-themed *Wild Gunman*, and the police-training style shooter *Hogan's Alley*. In North America a version of the game was released for Nintendo's VS arcade system the same year, prior to its home release in 1985. Former Nintendo market-research analyst Jerry Momoda remembers *Vs Duck Hunt* well. "VS System games were an inexpensive two-chip update [of existing Famicom titles] with new cabinet graphics," he says. "They were a welcome alternative for operators who had plenty of old cabinets. Operators could quickly change games on location with little downtime, and keep locations fresh with new titles. The VS



PERIPHERAL VISION

Other games featuring notable or peculiar hardware add-ons

GYROMITE NES

■ Aka *Robot Gyro*, it was designed for use with the Robotic Operating Buddy (R.O.B.) for NES. It's a two-player puzzle platform game, the second player using R.O.B. to move on-screen gates and pillars by manipulating a pair of gyroscopic spinning tops.

MARIO CLASH VIRTUAL BOY

■ Amazingly, there were no proper Mario games on Nintendo's failed console. What there was, however, was this fun effort that has Mario flinging shells at enemies on distant ledges while avoiding enemies and hazards found on his own platform.

YOSHI'S SAFARI SNES

■ One of the few fun times to be had with Nintendo's clunky Super Scope lightgun, it's an odd hybrid that sees you trundling along a highway blasting Bowser's minions, jumping obstacles and fighting ridiculous-looking bosses.

RESIDENT EVIL 4 VARIOUS

■ For its survival-horror masterpiece, Capcom released a bloody-looking chainsaw-style controller. The PS2 version even made little revving noises as you ran around decapitating zombies. Sadly, the shape of the controller was a bit awkward.

OUT RUN 3D MASTER SYSTEM

■ While *Space Harrier* deserves a mention, we're actually going to go with *Out Run 3D*. The animation is a little choppy at time, but the impressive visuals and new track designs certainly make up for it. Highly recommended.

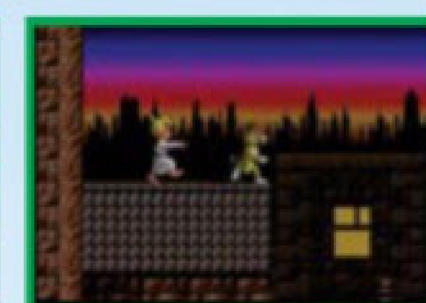
FAITHFUL HOUNDS

More videogames featuring doggy heroes



STAR PAWS
VARIOUS

■ Based on an abandoned concept that was dreamt up by *Manic Miner* creator Matthew Smith, *Star Paws* resembled a sort of *Road Runner* in space. As Captain Roger Pawstrong it was your job to capture delicious but fiendishly wary Space Griffins and dispatch them to Earth. The C64 version featured a great soundtrack by composer Rob Hubbard.



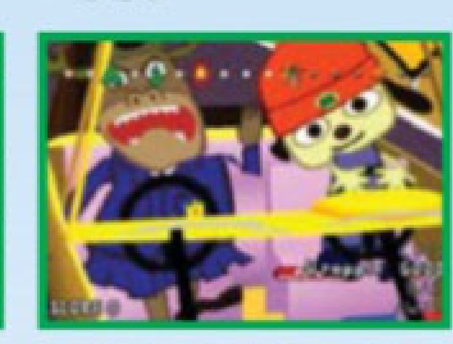
SLEEPWALKER
AMIGA

■ Released in aid of the BBC's Comic Relief charity, this game saw players controlling Ralph the dog and protecting his sleepwalking master. Ralph had to neutralise various hazards in his owner's path as he careered ever-onwards, taking care not to wake him up. It also featured small cameos from comedians Lenny Henry and Harry Enfield.



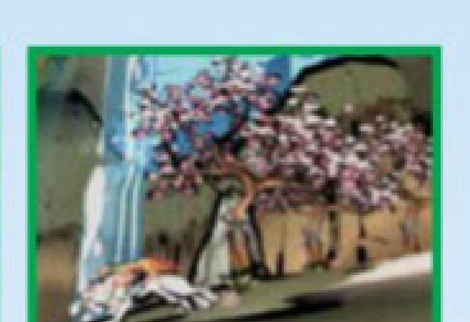
SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD
PC DOS

■ This was the first outing for Steve Purcell's unlikely detective duo – a six-foot fedora-wearing dog and a hyperkinetic 'rabbity-thing'. It's an all-American road trip involving robot scientists, a frozen Bigfoot and the world's biggest ball of twine, and formed the basis for Telltale Games' modern episodic series of adventures.



PARAPPA THE RAPPER
PLAYSTATION

■ Wonderfully quirky and unmistakably Japanese, *Parappa* introduced us to the peculiar tale of a funky paper-thin canine, his sunflower girlfriend, and a karate-practising onion, among other things. A precursor to the many popular rhythm-based games that followed, it also spawned a guitar-focused sequel *UmJammer Lammy*.



OKAMI
VARIOUS

■ *Okami* puts you into the paws of a snow-white wolf called Amaterasu, tasked with exploring a watercolour-like medieval Japan. You'll need to master the game's innovative 'brush stroke' techniques to solve puzzles and strike down enemies, while colouring in the beautifully dreamlike game world resembling a children's drawing book.



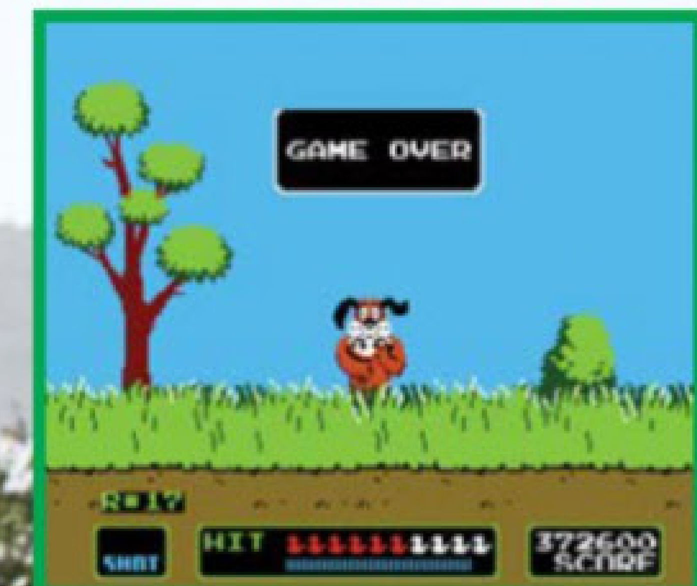
» [NES] Each level starts with your faithful hound sniffing out ducks, before leaping into action.



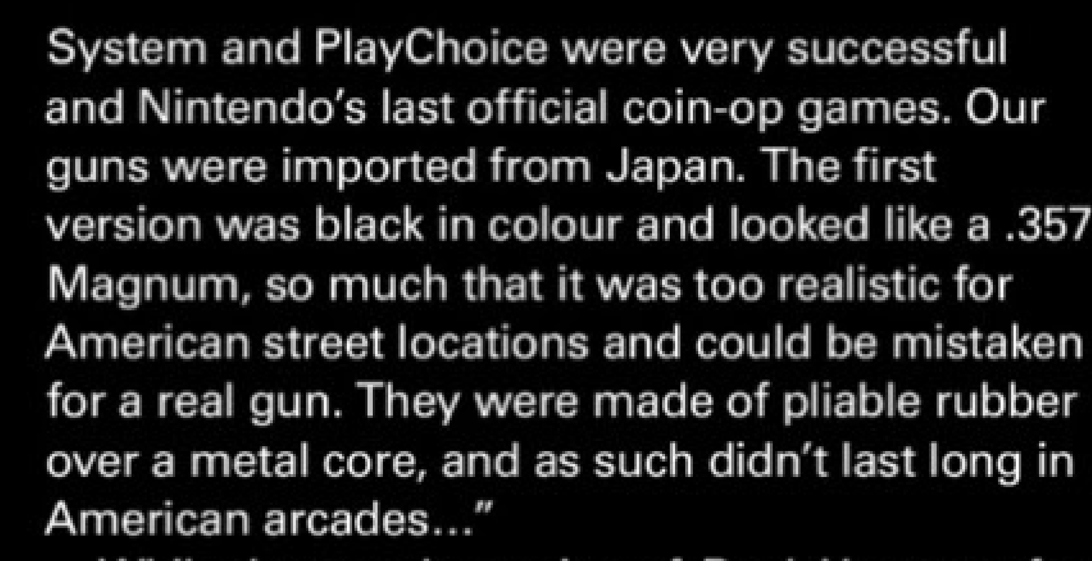
» [Arcade] *Duck Hunt* is effectively a remake of one of Gunpei Yokoi's earlier games.



» [NES] The dog's name is rumoured to be Mr Peepers, but we've found no hard proof of this.



> "The first [arcade gun] version was black and looked like a .357 Magnum, so much that it was too realistic for American street locations"

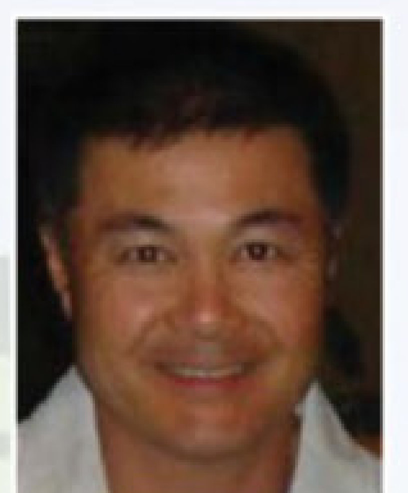


System and PlayChoice were very successful and Nintendo's last official coin-op games. Our guns were imported from Japan. The first version was black in colour and looked like a .357 Magnum, so much that it was too realistic for American street locations and could be mistaken for a real gun. They were made of pliable rubber over a metal core, and as such didn't last long in American arcades…"

While the arcade version of *Duck Hunt* was for the most part very similar to the console release, there were a couple of notable differences. The cabinet was set up with a couple of lightguns with players taking turns to play, and the game alternated between duck and skeet shooting rounds. And, as perhaps could be deduced from the cabinet marquee, which depicted *Duck Hunt* dog cowering from a hail of bullets, it was possible to shoot more than just the ducks. There was an added bonus round in which our canine pal popped up among the feathered targets and could be blasted by 'mistake', a misdemeanour for which he'd rightfully scold you at the end of the segment. To the future disappointment of many a NES *Duck Hunt* player that longed to zap that annoying grin off the mickey-taking hound, this little Easter Egg was unfortunately nowhere to be seen in the console version. While ▶

JERRY MOMODA

At Nintendo of America in the Eighties, Jerry helped to test and promote new arcade and console products



What's your personal history with the console and arcade versions of *Duck Hunt*?
I was hired by Nintendo in 1982, and was fortunate to be the one to communicate with Japan on games in development. No one wanted to touch the console industry in America after the crash of 1983. The VS [Arcade] System served as a bridge leading up to the North American NES release in 1985. Both *Duck Hunt* and *Hogan's Alley* were first released for the coin-op VS System in 1984. The VS System was simply a coin-operated version of the Japanese Famicom console.

Was the arcade version of *Duck Hunt* as popular as the home version?
It was designed to be a Famicom/NES title, from the simplicity of gameplay and the graphics. *Duck Hunt* was bundled along with *Super Mario Bros* in some configurations of the NES console, so it reached way more players. It's a better fit for the console player base. *Duck Hunt* and *Hogan's Alley* both had instant but not long-lasting appeal in arcades.

And in the arcade version you could actually shoot that pesky dog?!
Everyone wanted to shoot [it] because it mocked players. And so it played an antagonist role as it taunted players by laughing at them. For obvious reasons, being able to shoot the dog was removed from the NES version. This was designed to be good, clean, family fun – a Nintendo trademark. In *Hogan's Alley*, shooting people (though animated) probably affected its marketability.

How important do you think the cartoon-like graphics were in drawing people in?
In the home market I think it had a lot of appeal. For the players it targeted, cartoon-like graphics had a strong appeal. The warm, vibrant colours used in *Duck Hunt* gave it a whole different feel than games like *Hogan's Alley*. Naturally, parents don't mind as much if little Johnny is going cartoon duck hunting versus shooting at humans in a realistic war, zombie, crime or space game.

Why do you think *Duck Hunt* is still so fondly remembered today?
As with other Nintendo games, it's a piece of people's childhood. Anyone who grew up owning a NES remembers this game fondly. Being a pack-in, nearly everybody owned the game. It's a conversation piece that people can share. The same way they talk about *Super Mario Bros*…

TWEETY BIRDS

Ten more videogames starring various feathered friends

PHOENIX
ARCADE

For some reason several early arcade shoot-'em-ups had you shooting at flocks of kamikaze birds in space, notably Nintendo's *Space Firebird* and this offering from Centuri/Taito. Though highly derivative of *Galaxian*, it had a certain charm, especially the stage with eggs hatching into larger winged baddies, and the final mothership which players had to chip away piece by piece in order to destroy the core.

PENGO
ARCADE

If you like the idea of squashing cute blobby monsters with ice blocks, accompanied by a rendition of synth instrumental classic 'Popcorn', then *Pengo* is the game for you. The aim is to defeat Pengo's arch-enemies, the Sno-Bees, by flattening them with the movable parts of the maze. Your diminutive penguin can also stun enemies by wobbling the side of the screen, or win by pushing three 'diamond' blocks together.

JOUST
ARCADE

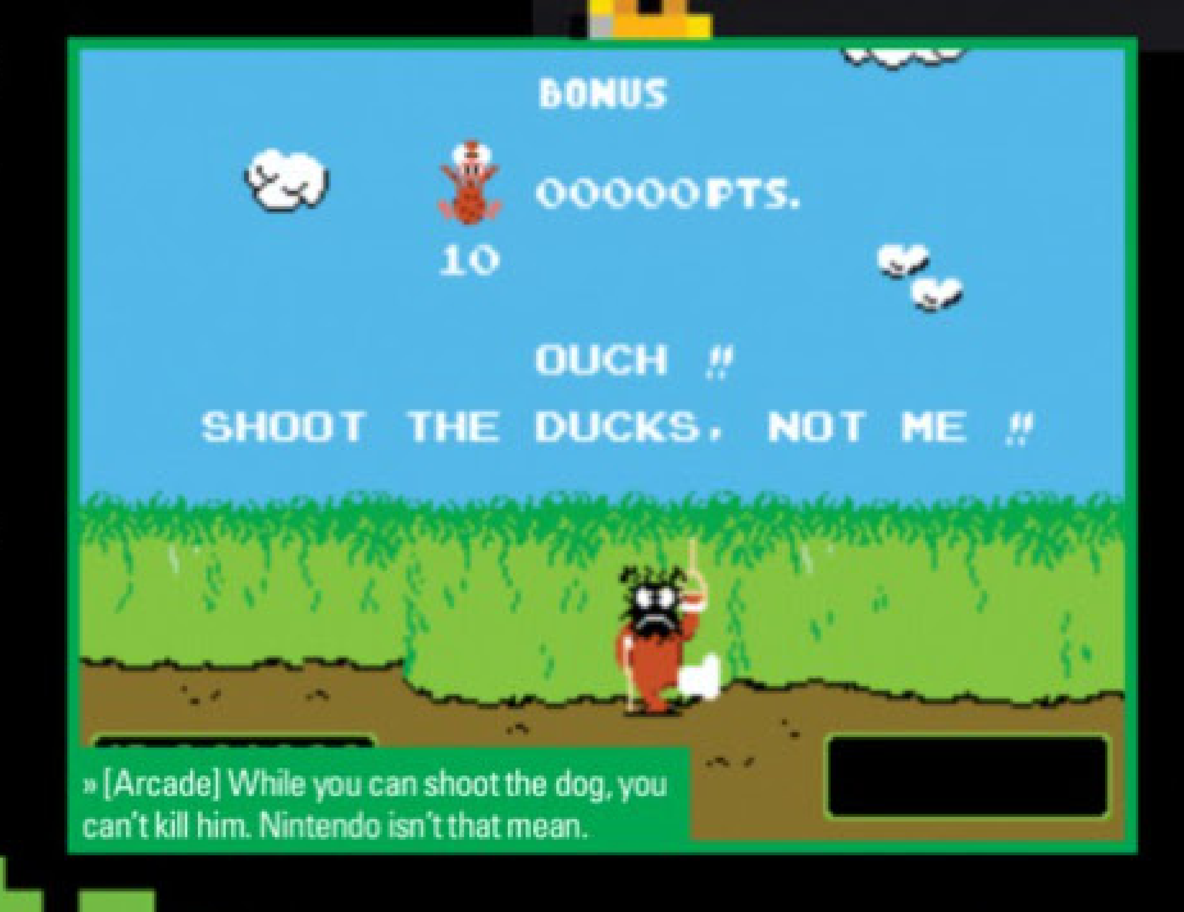
Joust's unique concept of making simple physics your weaponry made it stand out in Eighties arcades, plus the fact that it was one of the first co-operative two-player games. As a pair of knights mounted on an ostrich and a stork, it was a matter of hammering the flap button to gain altitude then using gravity to come down on top of enemies mounted on buzzards, knocking them from their steeds.

FLICKY
ARCADE

This attractive arcade game was designed by Yoji Ishii, who later went on to create the colourful shoot-'em-up *Fantasy Zone*. The game sports a great degree of character, particularly in the form of Flicky himself, a cute blue bird tasked with rescuing a number of yellow chicks from the clutches of some mean pussycats. The way they follow you around in a little line across the scrolling stages is simply adorable.

Nintendo was happy enough to let as shoot at defensive poultry, discharging virtual slugs at the family pet was it seems a step too far for domestic duck-hunters.

For the Western release of the NES lightgun, the famous Zapper, the Dirty Harry-style Japanese Beam Gun was remodelled as a futuristic, and somewhat less realistic virtual weapon. Inside the Zapper was a simple sensor which responded to changes in luminosity on the screen. In *Duck Hunt* and other Nintendo Zapper titles, pulling the trigger caused the screen to black out and display white boxes around the targets, just for a fraction of a second. The Zapper detected this change in intensity of light along with whether you were near enough centred on the boxes to score a hit on a duck. And that's why when you played *Duck Hunt* you'd occasionally sense the odd flickering effect, although it wasn't annoying enough to spoil the fun. The way the Zapper worked also meant that pointing it at a light-bulb wouldn't do you any good if you wanted to cheat, although sticking it right up near the screen might have helped, if kind of defying the point of the game. The timing issues of the Zapper hardware unfortunately means that *Duck Hunt* won't work on modern LCD TVs.



» [Arcade] While you can shoot the dog, you can't kill him. Nintendo isn't that mean.



CHICKIN CHASE
COMMODORE 64

■ In this curious Firebird budget title you play a lone rooster in a henhouse. It's down to you to make sure the inmates are laying plenty of eggs by, erm, fertilising lady chickens, while fending off pesky foxes, weasels and snakes. Mess up and the farmer's wife will come chasing after you with a rolling pin and dispatch you to the cooking pot. Ouch. We bet Foghorn Leghorn never had to deal with this sort of thing.

ANGRY BIRDS
VARIOUS

■ Who'd have thought that a game involving catapulting rotund wildfowl at pigs in towers would take over the world? With over two billion downloads across multiple platforms to date, *Angry Birds* is the most successful mobile gaming app franchise ever created, and the biggest thing to come out of Finland since Nokia phones. We're still not sure what those poor piggies did to make those birds so mad, though.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST
SNES

■ Anyone who's played a *Zelda* game will no doubt have tried to wallop the domestic chickens (or 'Cuccos') that populate the land of Hyrule at some point. However, *A Link to the Past* introduced an amusing feature where persistent hen-botherers were mobbed by an angry flock of killer poultry, meeting an undignified end beneath dozens of pointy beaks.

THE NEW ZEALAND STORY
ARCADE

■ Taito's cute platform game follows the adventures of Tiki the oddly yellow Kiwi, whose girlfriend and kiwi chums have been kidnapped by leopard seal Wally. Armed with a bow and arrow, he sets off to free them, negotiating balloon rides, spiked mazes, whales and punk teddy-bears on his way. A NES version, programmed by Software Creations, was released by Ocean.

FINAL FANTASY VII
PLAYSTATION

■ First popping up in *Final Fantasy II*, the Chocobo has since become one of the mascots of Square's flagship RPG series. In *FFVII* they take on the appearance of a cross between an ostrich and Woodstock from the Peanuts cartoon strip, and can be bred, raced and ridden across the game world. You can even get hold of a summon spell that drops an enormous fat Chocobo on top of your enemies…

ROAD RUNNER
ARCADE

■ Meep meep! Everyone's favourite cartoon bird made his arcade debut in Atari's take on the famous Looney Tunes shorts. Players take control of the Road Runner (Accelleratii Incredibus) as he zooms through the desert evading Wile E Coyote (Carnivorous Vulgaris) and his various backfiring Acme inventions. Along the way he has to negotiate traffic and scoff plenty of bird seed to avoid becoming dinner.

Duck Hunt comes with three different modes – game A gives you three bullets per duck to shoot at ten targets that rise consecutively from the thicket, the trickier game B gives you the same number of bullets to tackle two ducks flying up at a time, while game C substitutes clay pigeons for wildfowl. Game A also gives you an option for a second player to control the flight path of the ducks in a bid to put off player one, which can lead to a few hearty chuckles. Each mode continues at an increasing difficulty level until players reach round 99, when the game resets to a bugged round 0, featuring spectral ducks that are impossible to hit, echoing *Pac-Man*'s famous 'kill screen'. Another interesting fact about *Duck Hunt* is that its character designer (and the artist behind that famous doggy), Hiroji Kiyotake, went on to create Samus Aran of *Metroid* fame.

And in the latest instalment of *Super Smash Bros*, the snickering mutt is back on Nintendo's latest console, after being on the videogame 'bench' for 30 years. He comes complete with a duck on his back, and special moves that pay homage to other Zapper games including *Wild Gunman* and *Hogan's Alley*. You might not have been able to hit him with your Zapper back in the day on the NES, but now at least you might be able to slap him about a little bit. *



Halo was the game that changed a genre and helped Microsoft gain a foothold in the industry. Adam Barnes delves into how the evolutionary shooter was made



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:** MICROSOFT
» **DEVELOPER:** BUNGIE
» **RELEASED:** 2001
» **PLATFORM:** XBOX
» **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER



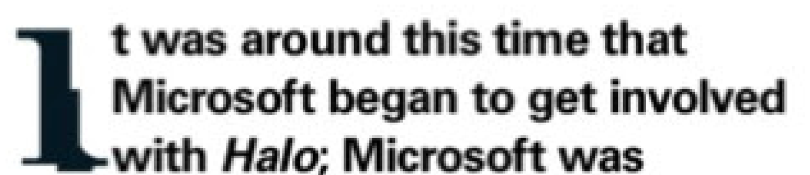
» Marcus Lehto worked on *Halo: Combat Evolved* as its art director. He now works for V1 Interactive.



When you think of *Halo* you think of multiplayer FPS and the importance of narrative in a game's campaign – both very *modern* concepts. Indeed, the franchise modernised the FPS genre, leading to radical changes in the approach of rival series. So when a game is notorious for being 'modern', for being 'fresh', it's hardly a surprise that you forget quite how *old* it really is. The original *Halo* debuted some 13 years ago, so we're stepping back to remember just how it managed to revolutionise a genre.

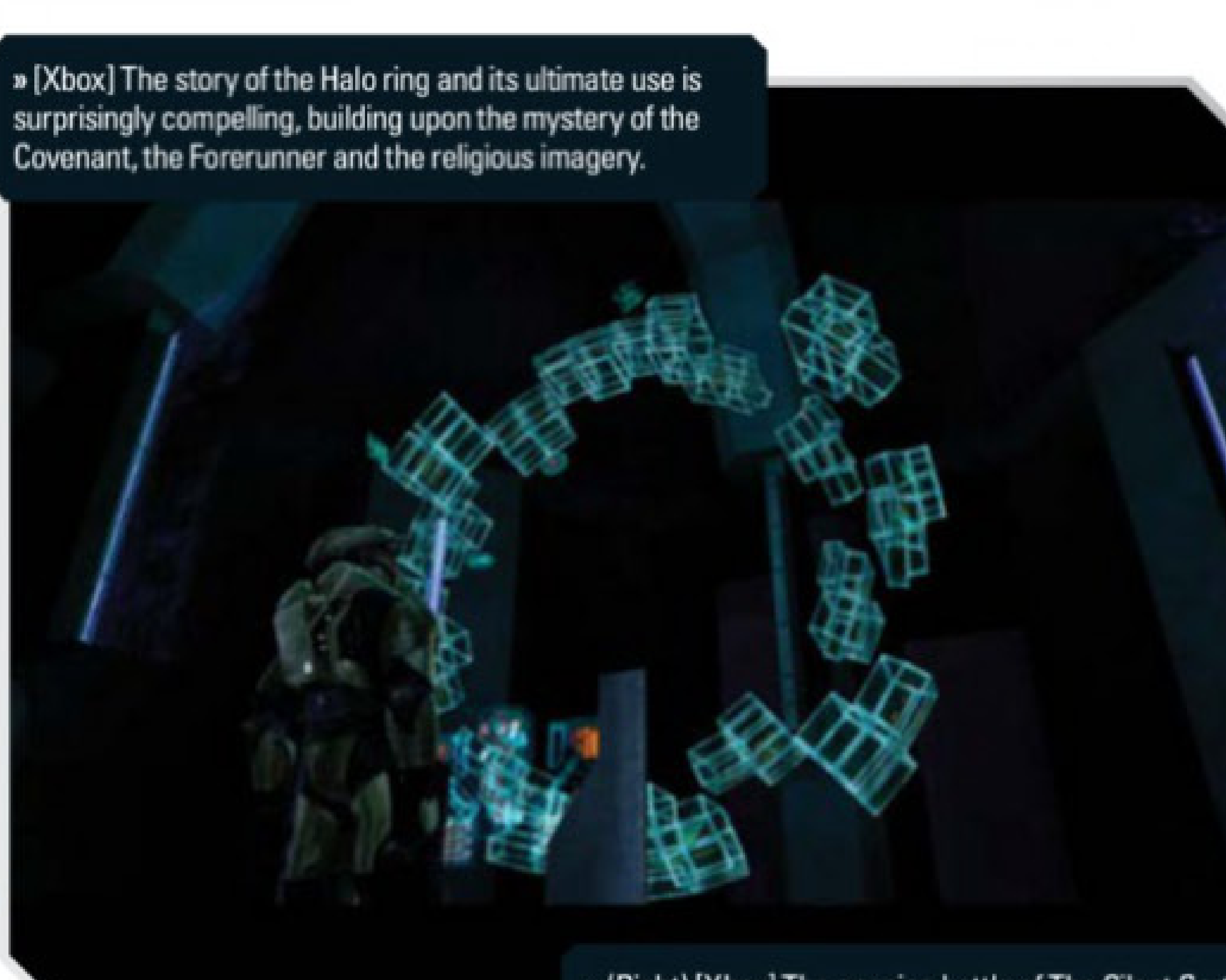
The irony, however, is that *Halo* wasn't born out of an intent to innovate shooters; in fact, it didn't even begin life as an FPS. "We were in preproduction for over two years, starting back in 1999," says Marcus Lehto, art director on *Halo: Combat Evolved* and the only developer to begin work on the game alongside Bungie co-founder Jason Jones. "The initial beginnings of *Halo* started out using *Myth: The Fallen Lord*'s engine and it was a truly open-world exploration game. Big, big, huge worlds; a block of islands that you could travel to. It was a top-down, *Commando* 'lead your troops from the sky' type of thing." Though Bungie had already cut its teeth in both the RTS and FPS genres with *Myth* (1997) and *Marathon* (1993) respectively, it was still a fairly small-scale developer. Yet in spite of this relative obscurity the project was kept completely under wraps, even internally. "In those early days there was a ton of secrecy around *Halo*," reveals Michael Evans, who would later become *Halo*'s lead multiplayer designer after shipping *Oni*. "I can't remember ever seeing an internal build of the RTS or the third-person version of the game. I do recall playing a really early version of multiplayer which was just on rolling hills; I am not sure if there was even a game mode back then. A very early piece of *Halo* trivia is that there was a build where one designer's head was much larger, to make him easier to headshot."

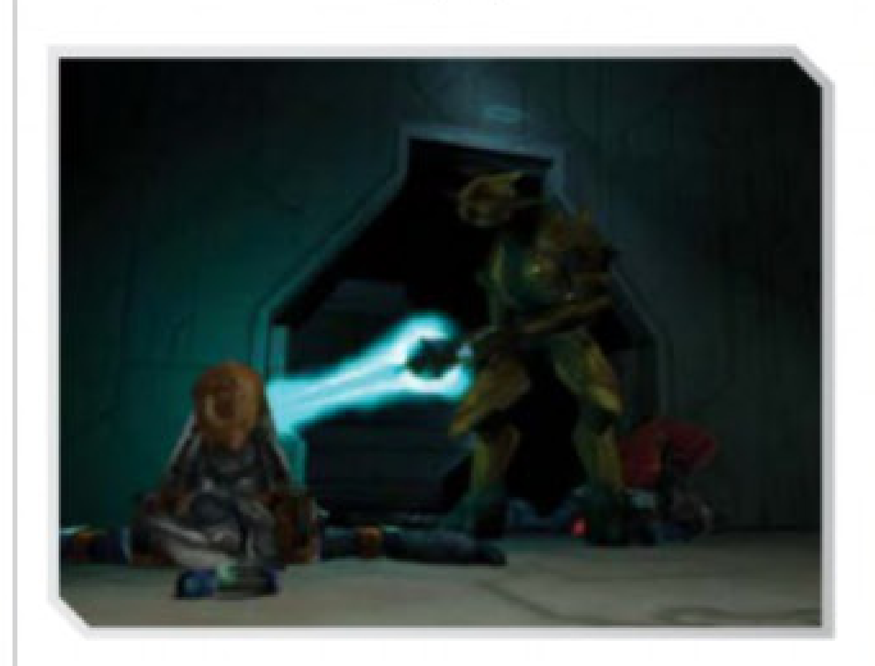
In time the *Halo* team grew and what became apparent was the connection between the player, the world and how it was meant to be explored. The sense of openness and freedom had been a core concept for the game from the beginning, and a top-down view was just not going to work. "So we converted part of that game prototype into a third-person shooter," states Marcus, "and it lived as a third-person shooter for some time. It was really interesting, even at that early time, but it quickly became apparent for those early days that the kind of control and the kind of connect that we needed from a player perspective needed to be in first-person."



It was around this time that Microsoft began to get involved with *Halo*; Microsoft was gearing up for the release of its debut Xbox console and it *needed* games. Interestingly though, *Halo* was originally scheduled to release on PC and Mac simultaneously – a fact that had been so important to Apple and its newfound approach to gaming at the time that Steve Jobs announced the news at the 1999 Macworld conference. However, Microsoft was so interested in *Halo*, so keen on the importance it could have for its newcomer console, that the firm bought Bungie in June 2000. "I think internally by and large we just wanted to make games," recalls Michael, "and the Xbox was very exciting for PC game developers. There were some people who left and some people who ▶

» [Xbox] The story of the Halo ring and its ultimate use is surprisingly compelling, building upon the mystery of the Covenant, the Forerunner and the religious imagery.







» (Right) [Xbox] The opening battle of The Silent Cartographer remains a standout moment and encapsulates a sense of panic, rush and excitement not matched until *Medal Of Honor Frontline* a year later.



» [Xbox] *Halo* wasn't the first game to create unique enemies that fought in different ways, but the way they each changed how you yourself battled them was new.

> **"Halo was a top-down, Commando 'lead your troops from the sky' type of thing"**
> Marcus Lehto

MAKING THE MASTER

Marcus Lehto on the evolution of a gaming icon

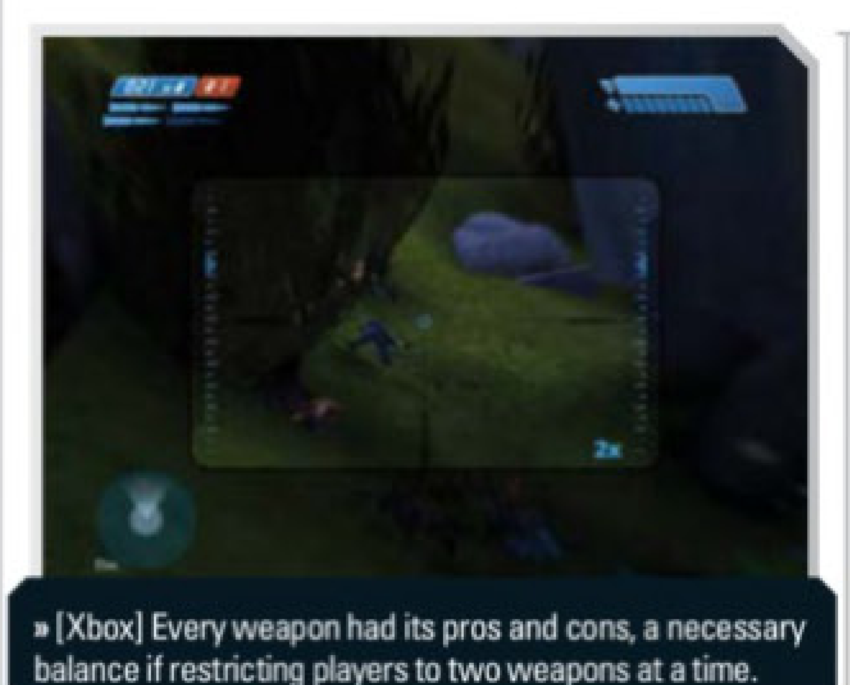
"He went through quite a bit of iteration in his early days," says Marcus Lehto of Master Chief's design. "I created the Master Chief, the Warthogs, the Pelican, the Halo ring, everything. It was really fun, initially, to build these things that became a kind of iconic fixture of the universe." John-117, to give him his real name, began life as a super-soldier ideal, even back when *Halo* was planned as an RTS. Marcus describes the Chief as originally being little more than a ubiquitous armoured character who "clearly didn't have any flavour whatsoever". Then Master Chief became more akin to an "anime-style" character, but even then was still "too slender, too feminine". Marcus decided then to "combine a human being with a tank". The armour expanded, the helmet became a bigger design focus and Marcus brought a more utilitarian approach to how the Chief should look. "You want to make something that players can connect with," says Marcus, "and when they believe it works, there's a suspension of disbelief when it comes to playing the game."

Microsoft decided not to take on – often I think foolishly. After the Microsoft deal, the *Myth* and *Halo* teams moved to Redmond." Though the acquisition was an appealing one for Bungie, none there could have predicted the effect it would have had on the aesthetic of *Halo* – a factor that would become key to its design. "[Microsoft] flew all of Chicago out to the Pacific northwest to the Seattle area," adds Marcus. "We were struck by the amazing beauty of the cascade mountains, the ocean, all of the peninsula to explore and that massively influenced the landscapes of *Halo*: the exploration value of it, the sheer cliff walls, the big waterfalls and all of that kind of thing." The change in scenery also influenced the freedom to explore in the game. "We felt that [*Halo*] provided a really unique sense of freedom for the player. Putting them into what is equivalent to a giant national park, for all intents and purposes, and allowing the player to free-roam and explore this giant natural wonderland that was the terrain of *Halo*."



» [Xbox] The Warthog is perhaps one of the most iconic vehicles in gaming; unsurprising when its unruly handling makes for many a memorable moment.

This freedom had as much effect on the gameplay as it did its visual design. "It was funny how that kind of worked," says Jaime Griesemer, one of the key designers. "I think the open environments came before the open shoot design, if that makes sense. So we had these environments that we wanted to build that had lots of multiple paths and these big, wide-open areas – because we could do that for the first time really in a shooter – and we had to work out what that meant for our mission design. It wasn't the opposite way where we were like 'oh we want to have these free-form missions where you can do things in any order'. It was sort of forced on us by the fact that we had this environment and we can't constrain what order you go through things, so we're just going to have to make it work."


» [Xbox] Every weapon had its pros and cons, a necessary balance if restricting players to two weapons at a time.

This sense of scale and exploration was something of a revelation for the genre, which at the time largely comprised two categories: enemy-packed kill rooms, like in *Doom*, or more linear, corridor-led games such as *GoldenEye 64* or *Medal Of Honor*. As a result, the game's name was important. It was Microsoft that later added the subtitle 'Combat Evolved' to *Halo* as part of a marketing decision to help it stand out from other military shooters of the time, a theme that was becoming particularly popular on the PlayStation. Whether it worked as a marketing exercise it's hard to say, but what isn't is how key this free-form method of gameplay was to *Halo*'s success – it felt completely new. Of course, alongside its more open environment and gameplay design came other problems, such as how to create enemies capable of tackling any number of potential combat actions. "We couldn't possibly script an AI in this open environment that will be responsive and be able to react to all the different situations the player can create," says Jaime, adding that Bungie had to "write an AI that can actually behaviourally be able to deal with all the situations".

The inclusion of a regenerating shield, too, spun the genre on its head – a feature that has sadly spiralled out of control in modern-day shooters where you'll spend most of the game cowering behind concrete blocks. Then there was the limit of only two weapons, adding to the free-form gameplay and creating a strategic element to proceedings. "I think the main goal with the Chief as a character was that he sort of always has the ability to use the tools that he has at his disposal well enough to accomplish his objectives," says Jaime. "So you don't always get to choose what weapon you're gonna have, you don't always get to choose what vehicle you're gonna get, but the Chief is just so incredibly competent at everything that you're going to be able to use whatever tool you can scrounge up that you're going to be able to overcome whatever fight you're in." But what is interesting is how this design choice was just as much due to the restrictions of moving from PC to console as it was

GAME CHANGERS Why Halo stood apart from everything else



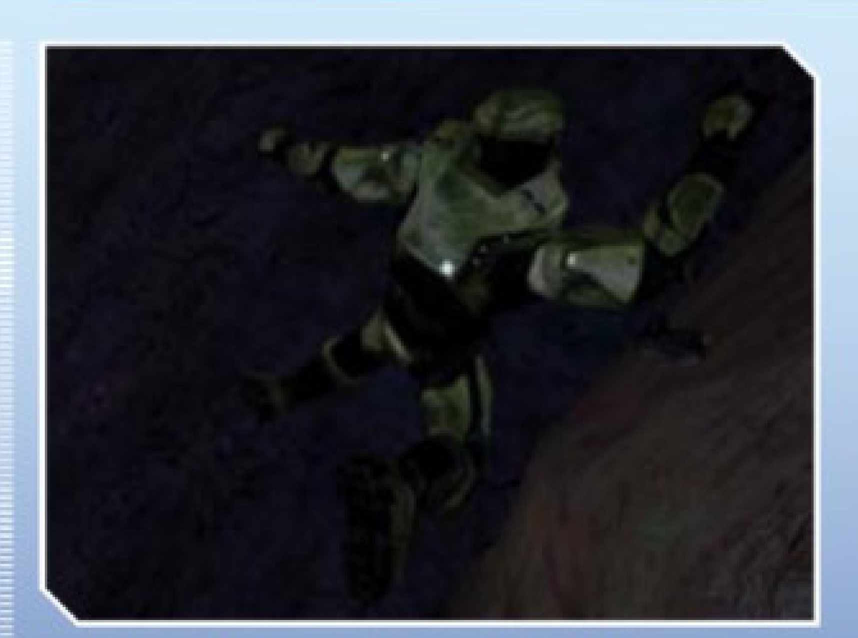
OPEN ENVIRONMENTS
■ The freedom that *Halo* enabled in its combat gameplay was its core concept. For the first time, Bungie had the necessary power to build such a sense of exploration into a shooter, and this remained the central pedestal which the game was designed around.



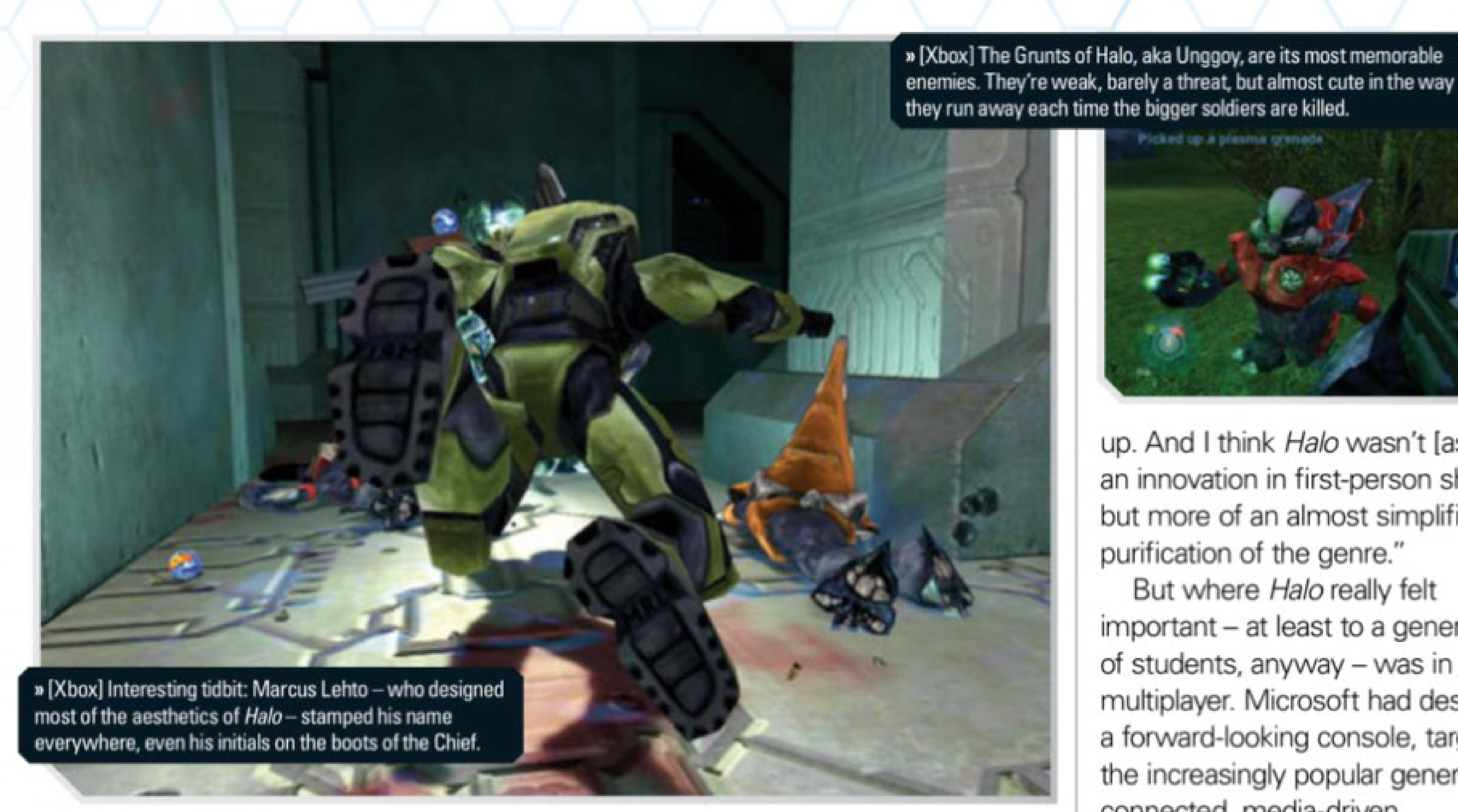
LIMITED WEAPON LOADOUTS
■ At the time it was commonplace for FPS games to simply add and add to your arsenal of weaponry. With its open-ended sense of place, *Halo* also brought along a strategic sense to the combat by limiting Master Chief to only two weapons at a time.

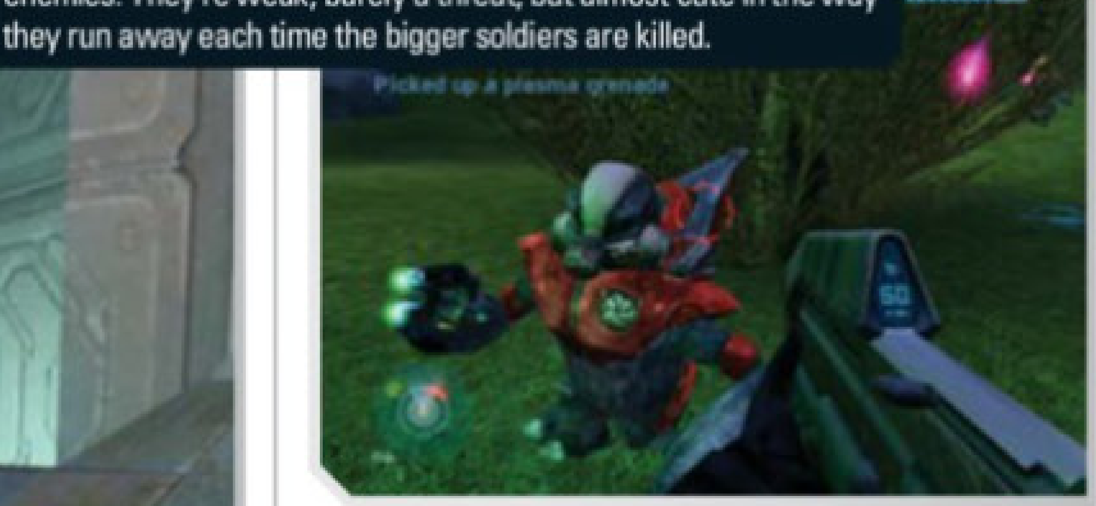


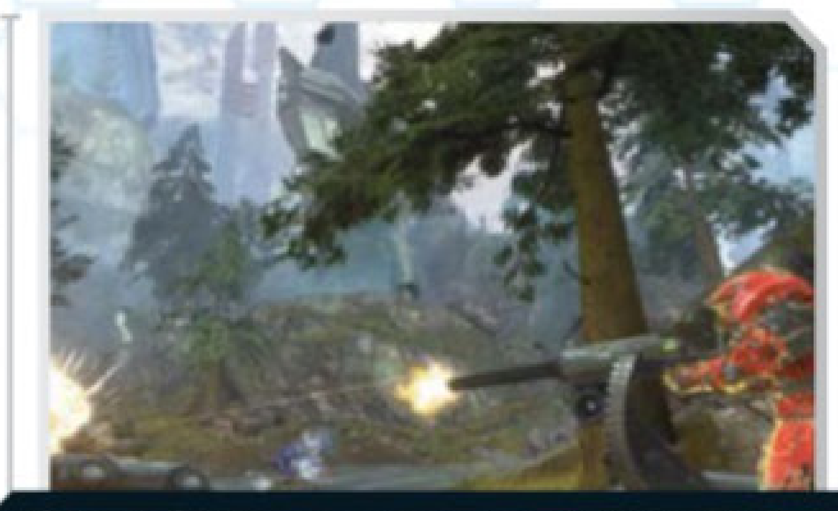
REGENERATING SHIELD
■ Master Chief's regenerating shield perhaps doesn't seem like such an unusual concept today, but *Halo* was the first game in the FPS genre to employ such an idea and it dramatically changed the way not only *Halo* was played, but future shooters too.



CONSOLE MULTIPLAYER GAMING
■ While Microsoft would continue to push this particular avenue for years to come, the popularity of *Halo*'s multiplayer – even without a working Xbox Live system – set a precedent for what needed to be done for console multiplayer.


» [Xbox] Interesting tidbit: Marcus Lehto – who designed most of the aesthetics of *Halo* – stamped his name everywhere, even his initials on the boots of the Chief.


» [Xbox] The Grunts of Halo, aka Unggoy, are its most memorable enemies. They're weak, barely a threat, but almost cute in the way they run away each time the bigger soldiers are killed.


» [Xbox 360] A HD revision was released in 2011. It will be included in the incoming *Master Chief Collection* for Xbox One.

> **"I think Halo wasn't [as much] an innovation in first-person shooters, but more of an almost simplification or purification of the genre"**
> Jaime Griesemer

a gameplay factor: "You don't have an entire row of number keys to switch between multiple weapons, you have at most one button, so we kind of had to limit the number of options you had available. And also one thing that was a big deal at the time was memory, so if we could let you arbitrarily switch between ten different weapons, what would happen was you would switch to one we didn't have alerted in the memory and so you wouldn't be able to draw anything for a third of a second."

The move from PC to Xbox was a costly one, going from a world of possibilities – at least on a technical level – to one that required overcoming a lot more restrictions and barriers. In many ways, believes Jaime, this move was fruitful to *Halo* in the long term, since it required Bungie to think about the game's design rather than simply expand upon what it had done before. "When you have no outside constraints – and the PC is very much that kind of platform – you just add," claims Jaime. "You just build on what came before. You just do the same thing you did last time but plus one, and you're never forced to cut or limit or restrain yourself and a lot of really good design happens when you run into these arbitrary constraints that you can't change. It lets you get rid of the cruft that builds up. And I think *Halo* wasn't [as much] an innovation in first-person shooters, but more of an almost simplification or purification of the genre."

But where *Halo* really felt important – at least to a generation of students, anyway – was in its multiplayer. Microsoft had designed a forward-looking console, targeting the increasingly popular generation of connected, media-driven consumers, and *Halo* was going to be a core pillar of that through its multiplayer. Xbox Live didn't launch alongside the console, however, and with it the connected multiplayer that *Halo* was originally built for. "There was some political conflict over *Halo* networking back then," says Michael. "A small group of guys on the Xbox side of the fence thought it was a bad idea to have networked games before there was Xbox Live. Then later there was a desire to support automatic networking only – ie you would become a server if nobody else was on the network and if there was a server you would just auto-join it. We really thought that the game would be awesome in college dorms." And it was. The decision to include a LAN setup arguably made *Halo* stand out, especially among students. Sony had already brought gaming out of the bedroom and into the living room with the PlayStation, and *Halo* grasped onto that idea. With hours dedicated to deathmatches or alongside team-mates in co-op, it was brought to the very forefront of these new, modern gamers – and word spread. Michael admits that much of the content associated with *Halo*'s original multiplayer was contract work, however, including the likes of Chris Carney who now still works at Bungie to this day. While internal designers got stuck in with map and mode creation where they could, the majority of multiplayer was made by outside hands. Its foundation, then, relied entirely on those solid gunplay mechanics, but it was clear soon after *Halo*'s release that this would be its legacy. "I think we were all true believers," says Michael, claiming that the entire team knew it had created something very special.

"The long-lasting legacy of the game has been a pleasant surprise as well," he adds. And while it's no doubt been a surprise to those who worked on it, when looking back on the scale and scope of *Halo* it's quite easy to understand the impact it has had.

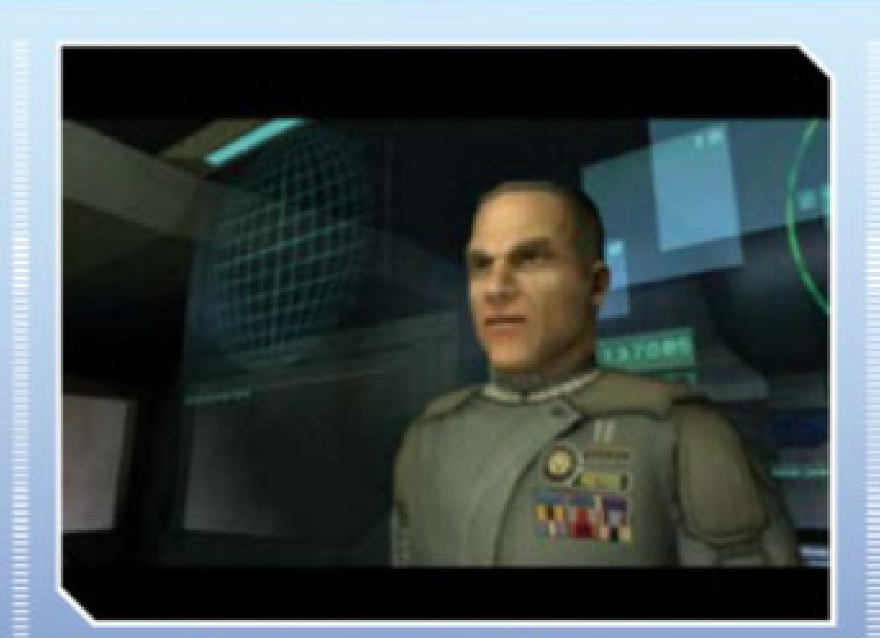


DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

MARATHON
SYSTEM: MAC, PC
YEAR: 1993

MYTH: THE FALLEN LORD
SYSTEM: MAC, PC
YEAR: 1997

ONI (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: MAC, PC, PS2
YEAR: 2001



ADAPTIVE AI

■ Though Bungie isn't the first developer to be praised for its artificial intelligence, it deserves as much credit as we can muster for managing to create such a dynamic set of enemy and allied combat routines to work so well in these large-scale open environments.



ADDING IN A STORY

■ The world that was built for *Halo* is rich with lore, but the way it is expertly told in piecemeal form – rather than in cumbersome inter-level breaks with long cut-scenes – helps tie it all together in a way that few games had done as well at the time.



CONSOLE CONTROLS

■ FPS games weren't as common on consoles as they were on PC, and when they did occur there were often compromises (such as *GoldenEye*'s separate aiming reticle). *Halo* was designed with the controller in mind, and changed the way FPS games were played on console.



CLASSIC MOMENTS

Wild Guns

» **PLATFORM:** SNES » **DEVELOPER:** NATSUME » **RELEASED:** 1994

Talk about not easing you in gently! The boss that awaits you at the end of *Wild Guns'* first stage is a ridiculous monstrosity that looks like it's been loaned out by Cyberdyne Systems. Dwarfing your puny-looking player, it alternates its attacks between tearing up the screen with an array of guided rockets and cutting a swathe of destruction with its immense Gatling gun. You frantically dash around, firing off round after round of hot lead with little impact on the metallic monstrosity's health. And then it hits you. Shoot for the core – all right, its head. With newfound purpose you direct your shots in a deadly hail of gunfire. The feeling of seeing it literally fall apart as you finally defeat it makes all the previous pain worthwhile. *

BIO

Wild Guns was the brainchild of Shunichi Taniguchi. It's effectively Natsume's take on *Cabal* and *Blood Brothers*, but the Japanese developer mixes things up by having its Wild West theme infiltrated by a bizarre assortment of robots that doggedly pursue your cowboy (who is styled on Clint Eastwood) around the screen. Despite its excellent and engaging gameplay, *Wild Guns* is now quite rare, often fetching silly money on popular auction sites.



MORE CLASSIC WILD GUNS MOMENTS

The lone gunmen

Wild Guns comes into its own when playing with a friend. The sheer number of enemies means you'll need a decent system for crowd control or it'll all end in tears. Our top tactic is to divide the screen in half, with each player focusing on their own side to minimise casualties. Just don't cross the streams or you may well find yourself playing on your own next time.

Boom, boom, shake, shake the room

The assault in *Wild Guns* is relentless. When not being attacked by cowboys riding on flying saucers, you're dodging giant robots that split open to fire missiles. Sometimes you just need to take a breather. *Wild Guns* may not be the first arcade-style game to feature a screen-clearing smart bomb, but we're pretty sure it's one of the most spectacular to gawp at.

Destruction corner

Pretty much everything on the screen can be interacted with in some fashion. Shoot a barrel and it explodes, bullet holes get left in crates, while chairs and tables become useless bits of wood. This OTT destruction is most noticeable in the saloon, where you can reduce bottles to smithereens and even obliterate a jukebox. We certainly wouldn't want to be left with that bill…

Comedy corner

Although it focuses on carnage, *Wild Guns* is also filled with fun little touches that can't help but raise a smile. One of our favourites is the comedy thwack you give to enemies that get too close, but if we had to pick one it would be the bush cowboys. These silly blighters comically appear in walking bushes, ready to take pot shots at you when they think you aren't looking.



TOMMY TALLARICO

Passionately involved in music and videogames since he was a boy, Tommy has created some of the most iconic soundtracks of the last 20 years. Today he works mainly with a project he founded, Video Games Live. Ahead of a European tour, Graeme Mason caught up with him to get some insight into his illustrious career…

He's been inducted into the Guinness Book Of Records for being the person involved on the most number of commercial videogames. He's written music and designed sound for countless platforms, from the Mega Drive to the Xbox. He created his own studio in 1994 and has devised and hosted two hit television shows. As you read this, Video Games Live, his pet project and main occupier of his time these days, has no doubt made a triumphant return to the UK. Tommy Tallarico has always been – and still is – a busy man. "I want to spread videogame music around the world to gamers and non-gamers," he says, "and the main reason I started Video Games Live was because I wanted to prove to the world how culturally significant videogames and its music has become." A noble cause, notes Retro Gamer as we rewind back to the Seventies…



» [Mega Drive] Along with *Aladdin*, *Cool Spot* was the game that propelled the Virgin team into the big time.

Hi Tommy, what was your first experience of videogames?
I still remember the first time I saw one – it was 1975 and my dad and I were at a neighbour's house. They had a Colecovision Telstar, which was a big woodgrain console with all these *Pong* games. I remember us marvelling at this, because what people often don't realise today was that back then we didn't even have remote controls for our televisions. So to be able to turn a knob and see something on the screen moving under your control was just mind-blowing. The next day my dad took me out and bought me one and I still have it to this day.

Presumably you already had a passion for music too?
Yes, especially guitar and piano. And when I was ten and *Star Wars* came out, it was pretty amazing musically. The music of John Williams in that film was the first time I paid attention to symphonic music.

How did the two interests merge?
By the late Seventies I was taking my dad's giant cassette recorder down to the local pizza parlour where the videogame machines were. I would record all my favourite sounds and music from the games and take it back home and splice them together. Then I'd invite my friends over, put some videogames on, play the cassette back and get up in front of the TV with a guitar and play along to the music.

So you were putting on your own little videogame concerts, even back then?
That's right, that was my childhood. Of course, being a kid growing up in the Seventies and Eighties, I never thought I would become a videogame composer because at the time there was no such thing.


Which other early computers and consoles did you experiment with?
In our neighbourhood you were either an Atari or Intellivision kid. As I was into sports, I had an Intellivision as it had better sports games such as *Baseball*, *Football*, *Boxing* and *Skiing*. My friends were mainly Atari though! From there I had a VIC-20, then an Apple IIc and IIe. And a Colecovision. But no matter what machine, when there was music I learned it, even something simple like *Snafu* with its 15 notes and 20-second loop. On one hand I'd be appreciating Beethoven and John Williams and also in the same session I'd be playing the music to *Pac-Man*!

How did you get started in the games industry?
I grew up in Massachusetts. When I turned 21, I left my parents crying on the doorstep as I was the eldest and wanted to go to California, determined to make it big somehow in the entertainment industry. So I got in my little two-seater sports car and drove out there with no money, no job, no friends and no place to stay. Just me and the car.

Brave move. You must have been pretty confident?
Yes, and naive! I sometimes look back and think, my god, was I insane? What was I thinking? But at the time it was such a strong feeling, which I think came from my grandfather. Both my grandparents came to the US from Italy, leaving everything they knew to make a better life for us in America. And they didn't even speak the language so they had it ten times worse. That stuck with me and my grandfather always said don't take anything for granted, ensuring we knew how important it was that we didn't squander any opportunities.

What happened when you reached California?
The very first day I was there I picked up a newspaper and saw a job selling keyboards at a music shop. They said I could start the next day, but I was still homeless for three weeks. I slept under a pier in Huntingdon Beach. I figured if you're homeless, you might as well do it at the beach in California, right?

How did the job go?
I only did it for a day! I had brought three T-shirts with me and back then not many people had videogame shirts. I had a TurboGrafx-16 shirt, which had only come out in Japan at that point, but I'd got it at this fair



» [Mega Drive] The insane humour of *Earthworm Jim* allowed Tommy to create some especially manic tunes.

> "I always know I have a great idea when people tell me I'm crazy!" Tommy Tallarico

» [Mega-CD] *The Terminator CD* was one of the finest games to appear on the Mega-CD – and you could listen to the music in your car (if you had a CD player).

» Tommy letting it rip at one of his live shows.

after standing in line for five hours and telling them what I thought of the console. To me it was a badge of honour, and the very first customer who walked in happened to be a producer working for Richard Branson named Seth Mendelsohn. Virgin was starting a videogame company right down the street and he saw my shirt and was impressed. We chatted briefly about videogames and he said 'Dya wanna job?' just like that. I'd been in California for three days, I was homeless, but in the videogame industry!

What was the job at Virgin?
I was hired as a games tester but would bug the VP of the company every day to tell him that whenever they needed music to let me know, just give me a chance. And then after about three to four months, the opportunity arose.

Who was the VP and which game was it?
A guy named Dr Stephen Clarke Wilson. He was the man who gave me my shot. Virgin were working on the Game Boy version of *Prince Of Persia* and I did the audio and music for it. At the time, the Game Boy had the biggest installed base so it was a big deal. It ended up winning a bunch of awards for the sound so they made me the music and sound guy. That's how I got in.

Was it new music or based on the original?
Partly both. Jordan Mechner's dad did the original music so I took those MIDI files, converted them and added my own stuff too. In addition to doing the sound, I was still working as a games tester.

Virgin must have been an exciting place to work at back then. What was the first game you worked on in your new role?
The Sega Genesis [aka Mega Drive] had been out a couple of years so Virgin was working on a bunch of games for that and the Super Nintendo. The first game I worked on was *Muhammad Ali's Boxing*; that was my first experience with the Genesis sound chip and six-voice FM sound. The SNES had an eight-channel chip and all sample channels, so we would work on the Genesis and convert over to the Nintendo machine. We all liked working on the Genesis better even though we knew the SNES had better capabilities. Sega were more open to developers so the Genesis was much easier to get around.

SELECTED TIMELINE

GAMES

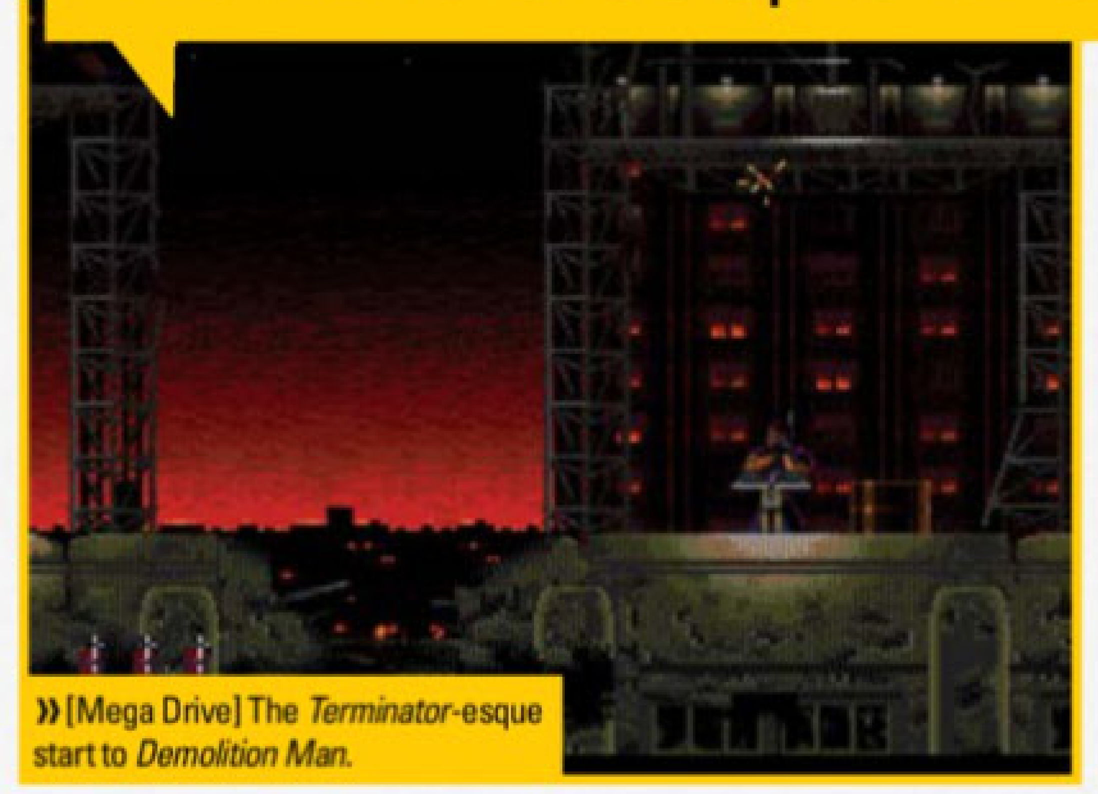
- **PRINCE OF PERSIA** [Game Boy] 1992
- **MUHAMMAD ALI HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING** [Mega Drive] 1993
- **ALADDIN** [Various] 1993
- **THE TERMINATOR** [Mega-CD] 1993
- **VIRGIN GAMES: GREATEST HITS VOLUME 1** [CD] 1994
- **THE JUNGLE BOOK** [Mega Drive/SNES] 1994
- **EARTHWORM JIM** [Various] 1994
- **MADDEN NFL 96** [Mega Drive] 1995
- **TOMMY TALLARICO GAMES GREATEST HITS VOLUME 2** [CD] 1996
- **MDK** [PC/Mac] 1997
- **EVIL DEAD HAIL TO THE KING** [Various] 2000
- **TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER** [Various] 2000
- **SPIDER-MAN** [Various] 2001
- **ADVENT RISING** [Xbox] 2005
- **PAC-MAN WORLD RALLY** [Various] 2007

Quite a few well-known games begin to appear on your CV at this point.
After the boxing game we did *Global Gladiators*, which was the first time I worked with David Perry and Doug TenNapel. After that, our next game with the same team was *Cool Spot*. *Global Gladiators* wasn't a critical or financial success, but *Cool Spot* was a big-selling game and won a bunch of awards. Then the same ten guys and one girl created *Disney's Aladdin*, which was a huge, huge hit, and about then we started riding in limos with Richard Branson…

Crikey – really?
Yeah, we were the golden boys back then. I had dinner with Richard and rode in his limo a couple of times. And because he was interested mainly in music, whenever he visited the offices he always came and sat in my studio.

What was he like?
A great guy. Inspirational, amazing personality, smart, yet down to earth. For a young kid aged 21/22 to have somebody like that in your life was a huge thrill. I can't say enough great things about him.

> "We were the golden boys back then. I had dinner with Richard [Branson] and rode in his limo a couple of times" Tommy Tallarico


» [Mega Drive] The *Terminator*-esque start to *Demolition Man*.



» [Mega Drive] *RoboCop Vs The Terminator* featured a robust selection of sound effects courtesy of Tommy.



FIVE TO PLAY

Tommy creates superb tunes. Here are some of our favourites



DISNEY'S ALADDIN

■ Until *Aladdin*, the common theory still persisted that the majority of film adaptations were at best a retread of a movie's finest moments or at worst a travesty of the screen original. But with help from Disney, including access to the film's entire original score, *Aladdin* became the game that helped shatter this rule. Superb graphics and sharp, fine gameplay were melded with Tommy's whimsically Eastern-flavoured music to create one of the finest movie adaptations of all time.



EARTHWORM JIM

■ Post-Virgin, Tommy Tallarico Studios signed a clutch of new contracts with not only Tommy's ex-employers but also David Perry's newly formed Shiny Entertainment. One of Shiny's first games would be the annelid-themed *Earthworm Jim*, a comedic platformer that required an equally jaunty soundtrack in addition to some novel and quirky sound effects. A similarly silly sequel followed a year later and the original has just been given a nice shiny HD update.



MDK

■ This is in a completely different league from the short and chippy tunes Tommy used to create on Sega's Mega Drive. *MDK* saw Tommy return to an orchestral score, this time using influences provided by the game's designer, Nick Bruty. With a moody, brooding tone that owes more than a little to the work of famous film score composer Danny Elfman, *MDK*'s music suited the Gothic third-person shooter to a tee. The score was written by Tommy and Todd Dennis.



ROBOCOP VS THE TERMINATOR

■ The ultimate in testosterone mash-ups, this muscular platform shooter saw the player take control of the Detroit chrome-plated crime-fighter in a contrived battle against the nefarious Skynet. Electronic themes were predictably the order of the day musically but it was with the powerful and industrial sound effects for which Tommy quite rightly gained praise. For the full story on this game you can pop back in time to **games™**'s retro section of issue 148.



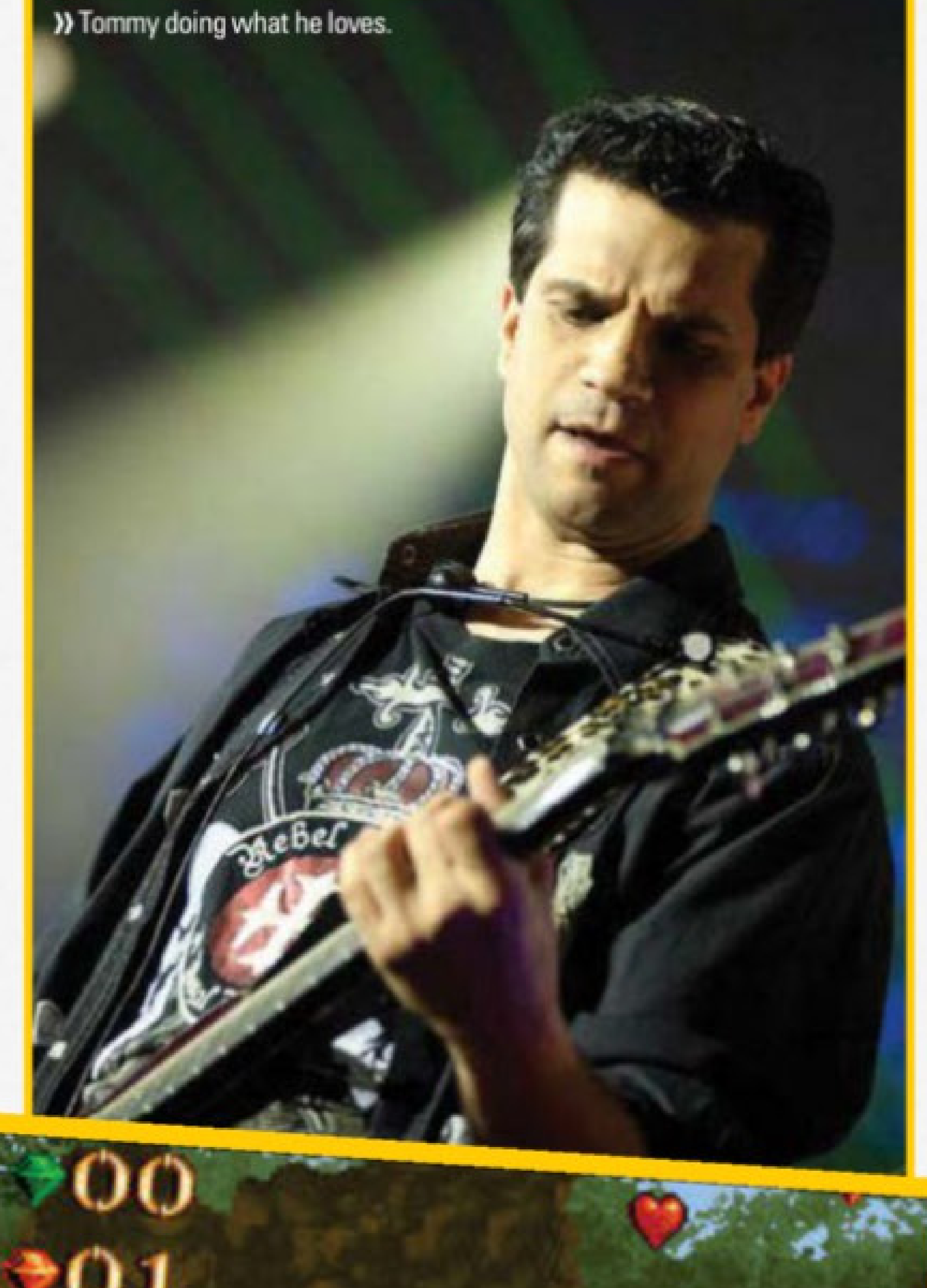
THE TERMINATOR CD

■ Like many games on the Sega Mega-CD, Virgin's *The Terminator* was a port of the Mega Drive original, although that description does it a great disservice. Featuring enhanced graphics, extra levels and cut-scenes from the movie itself, the most notable difference was a magnificent score from Tommy, laden with catchy rock themes and a pounding dance track for the level set in the nightclub, Cybertek. A stunning update of the MD original and one of the Mega-CD's finest games.

At that time you were doing a lot of sound and music: *Global Gladiators, Cool Spot, Aladdin, The Jungle Book, RoboCop Vs The Terminator*. How did you do so many in such a short time?
Nowadays when you do a videogame soundtrack they want four hours of music and a live orchestra. But back then most games were so small you had ten levels, a menu screen and end credits, so you needed 12 songs, all in MIDI, and they couldn't be very long because they took up a lot of cartridge space. So from a music writing standpoint it's about 30 minutes of MIDI music. The hardest part back then was actually getting it to sound like something. I spent more time than most just getting it to sound coherent rather than actually writing the music because the tools back then were so brutal.

You were working on many licensed properties. Did you often get the chance to work with the original music?
It tended to be a cross-between. We got the original *Terminator* theme but we couldn't use the actual recording so we redid that in MIDI. Then for *Aladdin* we got these scores from Tim Rice and Alan Menken and they said we could use whatever we could. I hired a couple of guys who could read music, which I couldn't at that point, and they'd convert the scores to MIDI files and limit them to six or eight monophonic channels. I would then take them and put them onto the SNES and Genesis and get them to sound like what you heard in the game. Then we wrote additional original music in the same vein.

The move from cartridge to CD storage was imminent – presumably this had a huge impact for you?
Yes, totally. That was the turning point for videogame music. We worked on one of the earlier CD games called *The 7th Guest*, which was a great game and sold a lot. The first CD console we developed for was the Sega CD [aka Mega-CD].



» Tommy doing what he loves.



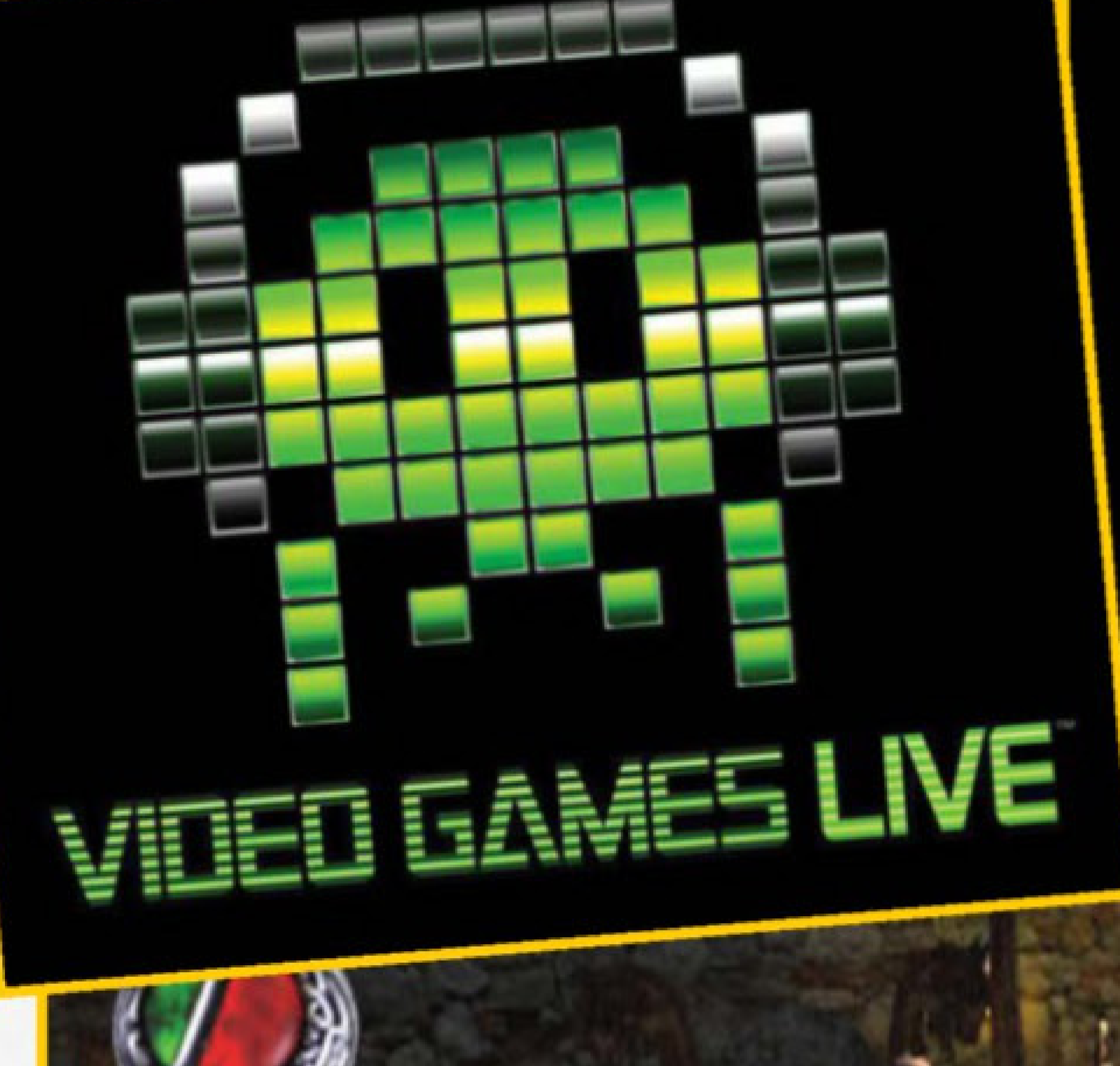
» [SNES] Encountering pesky chimps in the SNES version of *Disney's The Jungle Book*.

This was the Sega CD version of *The Terminator*?
That's right. But here's the interesting thing. If you played *The Terminator CD*, the graphics were still very much 16-bit-looking and the music you'd hear would be like music on the radio or on an album – and it was a bit jarring. So I would get into screaming matches with the producers because they told me they didn't want that proper music in the game. They said it doesn't sound like a videogame and I said exactly – it doesn't have to any more!

You were keen to embrace the ability to put real music into games?
Listen, being a 22-year-old guy who grew up on bands like Led Zeppelin, Van Halen and Aerosmith, I wanted it to be so much more than a bunch of merry-go-round boop-be-doop-be-boop tunes. That was okay when I was a kid, but this was the kind of music I liked, so why wouldn't other kids of my age? So I followed my heart on that and created this new and guitar-laden soundtrack, but I got a lot of resistance.

It went all the way to the top, to the president of Virgin Games, a guy named Martin Alper, who wasn't a gamer but ran the division. I remember marching into his office; I was on one side with the programmer, Silas Warner, and the producers on the other. We played the music and Martin said 'This is fantastic! What the hell would you wanna change this for?!' and it got in the game. On top of that, I really fought for the Red Book audio too. You could either put the music on the CD or you could stream it and it was called Red Book or Yellow Bbook audio. Yellow Book audio prevented people from listening to the music on their CD players. I wanted people to be able to listen to the music in ▶







» [PC] Brilliant PC shooter *MDK* had a dark and moody soundtrack courtesy of Tommy and Todd Dennis. It was released on CD in Germany.

» [PS2] Tommy created a bucolic theme for the jovial PlayStation-era update of classic RPG, *The Bard's Tale*.

their car. You couldn't buy it anywhere so why not give it away for free?

Having had this incredible success at Virgin, suddenly in 1994 you, along with many others including David Perry, left. What happened?
Back then the industry was very competitive and there weren't many people doing what we were doing, producing top-selling after top-selling game. I was getting weekly calls from Electronic Arts or Activision or Konami and they would all say 'How much are you making at Virgin? Whatever it is, we'll pay double.' But Virgin gave me my start and I always respected and appreciated that so I didn't want to just leave and go and work for some other company. David Perry had started Shiny and he said I could join them or do my own thing and work for all of them. So I did the latter and started Tommy Tallarico Studios and left Virgin with about two million dollars of contracts, many of them with Virgin. I started by doing the *Madden* games with EA, *Mortal Kombat* with Midway and then the *Earthworm Jim* games with Shiny and Playmates. David and I are still good friends to this day. I was his best man at his wedding.

And that was a good start to the studio.
After *The Terminator* I was able to write my own ticket and never having to worry about someone telling me to change it. They thought I was a pioneer and listened to me. When companies are calling you and saying please work for us, that's a pretty good spot to be in. I was lucky to have that.

Was it just yourself to start off with?
I moved my dad out to California so that he could be my chief financial officer. I needed someone to deal with contract aspects, collecting money and paying bills… To start with it was just the two of us, then I had a sound designer named Joey Kuras working for me to do the technical stuff I couldn't do. That allowed me to concentrate on just the creative process.

After the *Earthworm Jim* games, you moved on to a rather different project for Shiny called *MDK*.
That was a moody and dark soundtrack which Todd Dennis and I composed. I would go into Shiny once a week and spend a whole day working with the designers and implementing the music. Nick Bruty [*MDK*'s chief designer] had a vision about the music and he would give me different soundtracks to listen to that he liked. Lots of Danny Elfman!

By this point you were presumably not quite as prolific?
It was definitely getting to be a longer process and you'd spend like a year on a game. Practically overnight it went from 50 sound effects, 20 minutes of music and three voice-overs to a thousand sound effects, 90 minutes of music and hundreds of lines of dialogue. It changed real quick.

And amazingly you still found time to found a videogame news show?
I think it [*The Electric Playground*] was the very first videogame news show in the United States. It was on national TV and we were interviewing developers every week. I did that from 1995 until 2007 and it still runs today. And from it we did an offshoot called *Reviews On The Run*, also known as *Judgment Day*. So I was doing two half-hour shows a week, 104 episodes a year, another reason why I wasn't doing too many games by then.

You presumably left *The Electric Playground* to start Video Games Live – had that idea been in your head for a while?
I always wanted somebody to do something like VGL because I always wanted to go to something like that. But then nobody did. They had done a couple of symphony concerts in Japan, but it was very traditional with everyone in tuxedos and such. What I wanted was giant video screens, synchronised video, music from varied games such as *Kingdom Hearts*, *Halo*, *Warcraft*, *Metal Gear Solid* – and most of all to make a big rock and roll show out of it. And that all comes from being inspired by one of my family members who just happens to be a famous rock star…

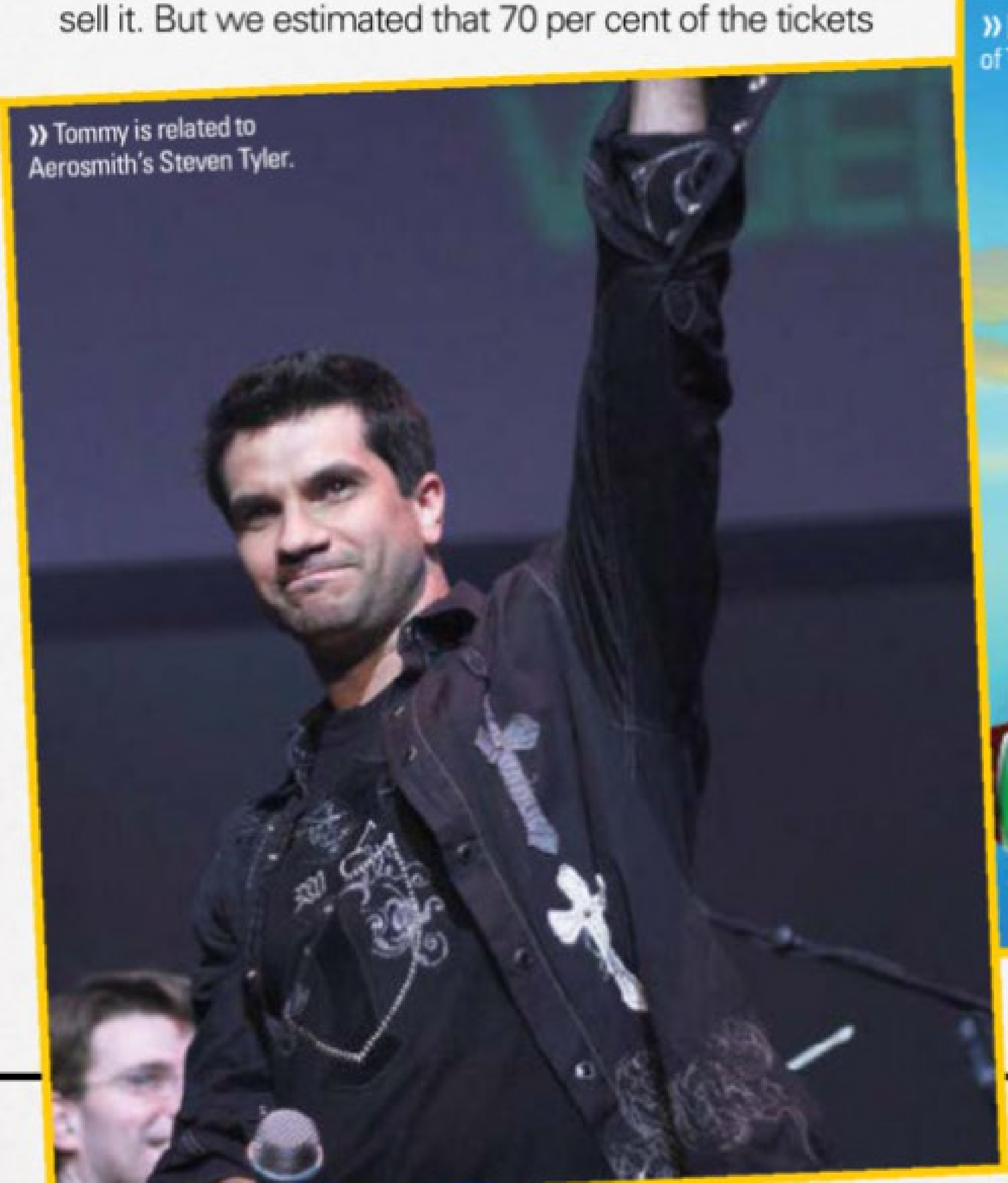
This would be Steven Tyler?
That's right, cousin Steven, born Tallarico.

> "Being a kid growing up in the Seventies and Eighties, I never thought I would become a videogame composer because at the time there was no such thing" Tommy Tallarico

That must have been amazing, growing up a close relation to Aerosmith's lead singer…
I always credit Steven as having the biggest influence I had. When you're eight years old and you're seeing this guy – or just big cousin Steven as he is to you – up on stage performing in front of 30,000 people in a stadium, you can't help but think yeah that's a pretty cool job, that's what I wanna do when I grow up. And I never thought it was an impossible dream as I always thought if he could do it, so could I.

What was reaction like to the idea of VGL?
Everybody thought I was completely insane, like they did when I put the *Terminator* music on the disc. I formed the company in 2002 and it took three years to put the first one on at the Hollywood Bowl. Its capacity was 11,000 and everyone said I'd be lucky if 1,000 turned up – and we sold out. So I always know I have a great idea when people tell me I'm crazy!

Still, it must have been somewhat nerve-wracking, that first concert?
After tickets went on sale I spent six months trying to sell it. But we estimated that 70 per cent of the tickets were sold in the two weeks leading up to the concert. We even sold 1,500 tickets on the day itself. So, yeah, it was pretty hair-raising.


» Tommy is related to Aerosmith's Steven Tyler.



» [Nintendo 64] The original *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* was sound-designed by Tommy Tallarico Studios.


» [Xbox] A rare recent soundtrack for Tommy himself, the critically acclaimed *Advent Rising*.

It must have been an amazing feeling, though, to be justified in something you felt so passionate about. How did you go about choosing the music for that first concert?
I just wanted my favourite videogame music. It didn't even have to be a triple-A game; a couple of games like *Beyond Good And Evil*, hardly anyone had heard of, but I just loved the score. *Medal Of Honor* by Michael Giacchino and stuff like *Myst*, *Warcraft*, *Zelda*, *Mario*, *Final Fantasy*. Then it was putting it all together, choosing the pieces, getting all the rights, creating the synchronised videos, selling it and marketing it.

How easy was it to get the rights to the music?
Most still thought I was insane! But one of the things that really helped was getting the Hollywood Bowl signed on so I could show them this was a serious thing and that it was happening. Electronic Arts were the first to sign on and Blizzard shortly after. So when you have them you can go to anyone, although working with the Japanese companies was difficult. I remember getting the fax from Nintendo the day of the Hollywood Bowl show, finally giving approval. They still hadn't signed the contract until the actual day itself. When you've spent $1.3 million to create a concert with video screens and lasers and all these musicians… wow.

The show was a huge success and VGL took off. How has it changed since?
We still had some work to do on the concept, but we did a show in Seattle and Vancouver later in the same year and they were both sold out and the train started rolling. I've never done the same show twice and every year we add more material to every city we play – so far I've created over 125 different segments. That's what keeps it exciting. I can only play about 18 songs per show and that's around a two-and-a-half hour performance.

There was a long gap between the current UK shows and the last. Why was that?
Since VGL has been successful, a lot of videogame concerts have started popping up, which I think is fantastic as a composer but what I don't like to see is people charging outrageous prices, and I refuse to charge those prices. The only way I can do this is if I do ten or more shows while on tour rather than just a one-off. That means I don't have to ask the local promoters for as much and hopefully they pass that on to the fans. So trying to put together ten shows over multiple countries, orchestras, venues and production is tough, risky and challenging. But I don't do it for the money: as long as it can pay for itself, then I'm happy as it's my passion, to spread videogame music around the world to gamers and non-gamers alike. So if I can do that and keep it going, it'll last for as long as people want to keep coming.

You've clearly had a successful career – which part of it do you look back at most fondly?
Probably around '92 to '94, those Virgin days with *Cool Spot*, *The Terminator*, *Aladdin*, the golden age of Genesis and SNES. Back then we were either pioneering or doing something special such as using guitars for *The Terminator* or a banjo tune in *Earthworm Jim*. It was just so… fun.



» [Wii] *Flip's Twisted World* is one of Tommy's latest works.



Leaderboard

GREAT GOLF, EVEN FOR THOSE WHO DON'T PLAY IT

» **COMMODORE 64**

» **BRUCE CARVER & ROGER CARVER** » **1986**

I don't care much for golf. Watching it isn't a great deal of fun and I am so unco-ordinated that attempting to play it would undoubtedly end in an act of unintentional self-harm, one so severe as to require my immediate hospitalisation. As such, it's quite strange that I enjoy golf games as much as I do. *Neo Turf Masters* was the game that hooked me, thanks to some post-karate sessions at the local sports centre, but *Leaderboard* was the first one I ever got into at home. We'd acquired it along with a C64 that we were given, and looking back at the long periods I spent playing it says something about my attitude to retro games.

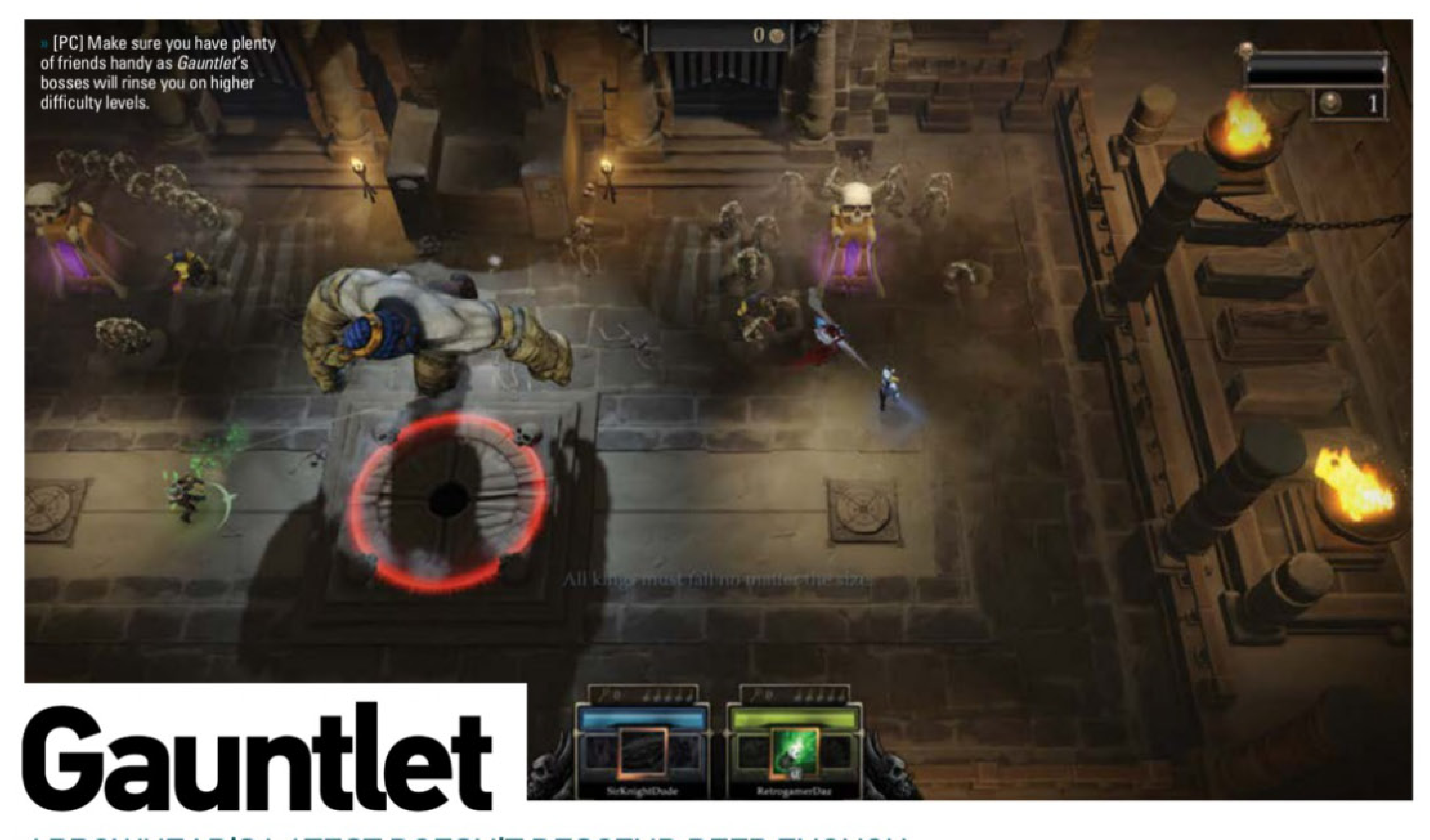
Given that I was a console kid first and foremost, *Leaderboard* did some things I hadn't seen before and considered a bit weird. In particular, that distinctive way of drawing the 3D scenery – outlines first, then filling in the colour – will always stick in my memory. That didn't deter me from playing because it played so well, with simple joystick controls and a shot system that was easy to figure out, even for my younger self. While the PlayStation was taking over the world, I was busy having fun with a game that was a few months older than me. I enjoy a good nostalgia trip as much as the next person, but for me retro gaming has always been about playing great games regardless of whether I caught them the first time around. *


HOLE # 3
PAR 5
COURSE 2
NICK
1 5 +11
2 E
3 E
4 E
WINDS
CLUB 5W
YARDS 217
POWER
SNAP

RETRORATED



>> This month Arrowhead Games goes dungeon delving with its update of Gauntlet. We also find out if the long wait for Super Smash Bros on 3DS has been worth the wait


» [PC] Make sure you have plenty of friends handy as *Gauntlet*'s bosses will rinse you on higher difficulty levels.

Gauntlet

ARROWHEAD'S LATEST DOESN'T DESCEND DEEP ENOUGH

INFORMATION

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PC

» **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A

» **RELEASED:** OUT NOW

» **PRICE:** £14.99

» **PUBLISHER:** WARNER BROS INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

» **DEVELOPER:** ARROWHEAD GAMES

» **PLAYERS:** 1-4

BRIEF HISTORY

» The original *Gauntlet* was released in 1985 by Atari Games and created by Ed Logg. Alongside the likes of *Dandy*, it helped popularise the dungeon crawler and received numerous home conversions. Just as *Gauntlet*'s generators constantly spawned monsters, the game itself birthed several sequels, of varying quality.



It's always tricky when you update a classic game. It's a difficult balancing act, requiring you to appeal to modern gamers while ensuring there's enough love for the original to keep fans happy. It's not an easy thing to achieve and many developers fail, so it's pleasing to report that while *Gauntlet* isn't perfect, it does manage to achieve both difficult goals.

The original *Gauntlet*, while enjoyable with friends, wasn't as much fun when playing on your own, mainly because fighting endless waves of monsters become repetitive when you couldn't shout directions/ advice/curses at a friend. The *Gauntlet* remake solves this problem by not only making the levels far more interesting, but also greatly enhancing the four available characters.

Take Questor for example. Faster than the other heroes, the elf can fire arrows with the right analogue stick, perform a handy evade roll, deliver deadly sniper shots and drop bombs. Thor is the archetypal Tank, but feels far more powerful here, effortlessly shrugging off smaller enemies and using a devastating axe swing that has impressive range. Thyra on the other hand can use the right stick to block incoming attacks, fling it outwards to catch unwary enemies and create handy shields to protect herself.

Merlin is the standout character, though, and the one the developers have clearly had the most fun with. What he lacks in strength he makes up for with a diverse range of spells, cast using different button configurations. Teleporting, ice attacks and fireballs are all in his repertoire and it highlights just how much thought Arrowhead has put into its game.

The characters are different enough that you'll want to play through the game with each one, and this is where problems do start to arise. Arrowhead has created a bunch of different items for the heroes to use, from helpful gargoyles to flaming boots, and they can typically be upgraded several times. It's a neat system, but it's a shame that there isn't anything like the skill trees found in games like *Diablo*.


» [PC] The Wizard is easily the best character in the game, and quite tricky to fully master.

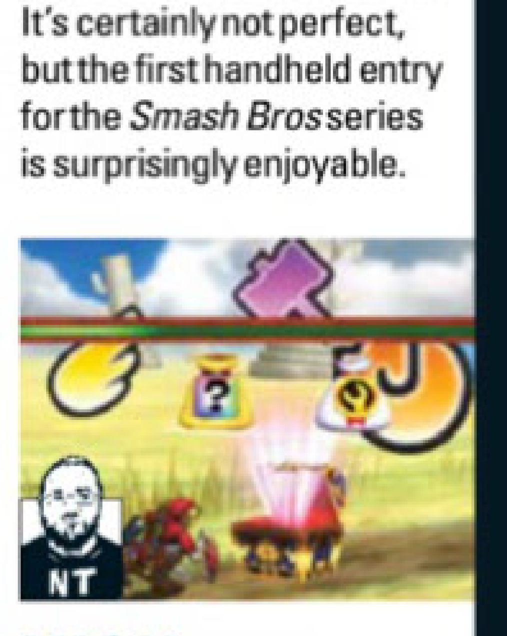
✱ WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
NINJA MASSACRE (ZX SPECTRUM)



▼ SOMETHING NEW
DIABLO III (PC)

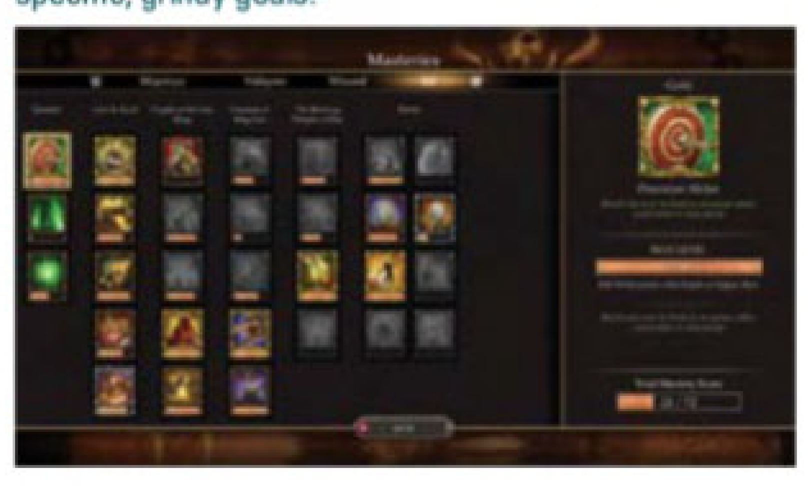
✱ PICKS OF THE MONTH



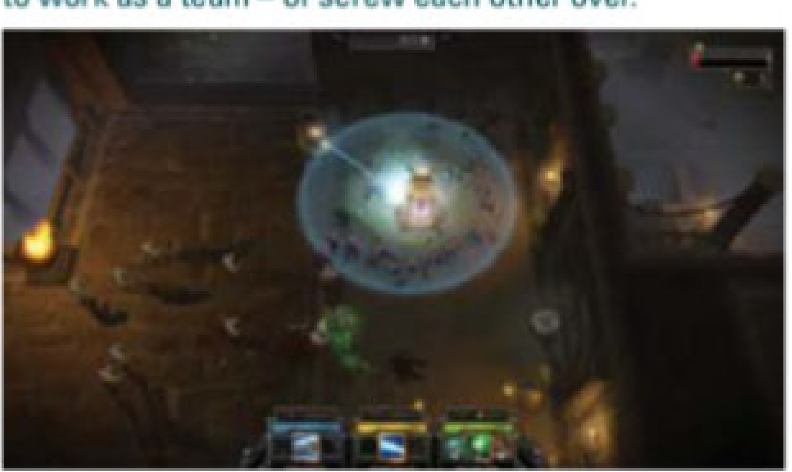
DARRAN
Super Smash Bros for 3DS
It's certainly not perfect, but the first handheld entry for the *Smash Bros* series is surprisingly enjoyable.

NICK
Super Smash Bros for 3DS
Local play is disappointing, but the 3DS game proves Nintendo's brawler can work on a smaller screen.

» [PC] Later levels will require you to lower bridges and activate various waypoints to continue.



» [PC] You'll earn a higher level of mastery by achieving specific, grindy goals.



» [PC] The characters work well together, allowing you to work as a team – or screw each other over.

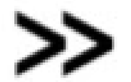
It's also disappointing that *Gauntlet* doesn't feature the same procedurally generated dungeons that makes Blizzard's game so enjoyable to repeatedly play through. Instead, *Gauntlet*'s main hub consists of three areas, each of which consists of three levels and a boss fight. The levels are further divided into dungeons, one of which is procedurally generated (although the results don't seem to vary too much in their design). While the dungeons themselves are interesting – a drawbridge to raise here, a lava puzzle to activate there – the drab colour palettes make everything look a little dull.

Because you know exactly what to expect from most of the stages, they can often feel like a grind to return to, particularly the third sets of each level, which often feel a lot more puzzle-based. Of course, if you return with a friend, things suddenly start to get much, much better.

Gauntlet's multiplayer is easily its greatest strength. Of course, we'd expect no less from the guys who created *Magicka*, but it's still pleasing to see just how well everything gels together. Each hero brings something significant to the party, and the decision to ensure that players cannot wander off on their own ensures that everyone has to work together in order to succeed.

This last point is critical as *Gauntlet* is no pushover on its higher difficulty levels. There are large numbers of enemies, often taking multiple hits to kill, so you really need to work together in order to highlight generators and quickly take them down. Sure, you can simply ignore your friends and rob them of much-needed food when they're close to dying, but as your own belongings can be looted upon death, teamwork should always be your main priority. *Gauntlet* has the spikiness of the original game, but it also remembers that ultimately selfishness will only take you so far. Normal difficulty is fine for single play as it doesn't present much of a challenge, but the game certainly opens up when you crank the difficulty.

The game gets tougher when you battle bosses as well. They're huge in size, often dwarfing the characters and it takes a fair while to suss out their attack patterns. In fact, our biggest regret with the bosses found in *Gauntlet* is that there simply aren't enough of them. Again, they present a significant challenge on higher difficulties, but it's a pity that Arrowhead couldn't have included more of them to scrap.

Arrowhead may have skimped on bosses and levels, but in terms of actual fan service it's hard to imagine the developer giving more. Sounds are just as you remember them – we love the ding that comes from picking up a key – many of the classic monsters return, while the competitive/teamwork nature of the original game is everywhere you look. A fine homage to the arcade original, *Gauntlet* has plenty of new mechanics to interest the more modern gamer. 

In a nutshell

It's a little too short, but Arrowhead's game easily captures the thrill and excitement of the arcade original while keeping it relevant for today's more demanding audience.

>> Score **75%**

RETROROUND-UP

>> Every month we look at all the classics and latest releases that are available to buy or download

PICK OF THE MONTH

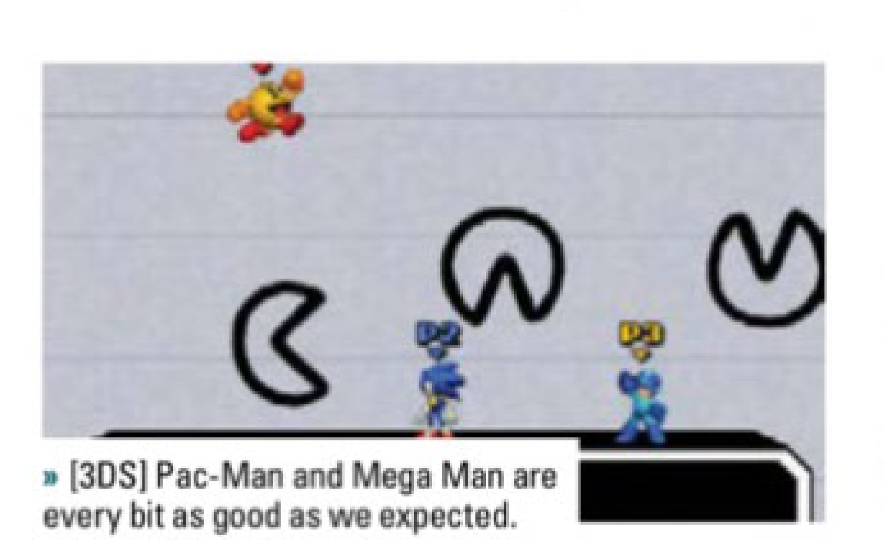
Super Smash Bros 3DS

» System: 3DS » Cost: £39.99 » Buy it from: Online, 3DS Shop, Retail

***Super Smash Bros* is absolutely ram-packed with content. In fact, it's so full that a lot of it is near impossible to find, due to Nintendo creating some of the messiest menus to ever appear in a videogame. Trying to find game modes and events in *Super Smash Bros* is a right chore and we really hope the Wii U version won't suffer from the same issues.**

Menu issues aside, there's still much to enjoy in *Smash Bros*' first handheld outing. The gameplay is just as you'd expect, with the A button handling your light attacks and the B button taking care of your heavier strikes. Grabs are easy to pull off, while the Smash Attacks are as insane as you'd expect. Experimentation has always been the key to past games, and it's no different here. Although the large character roster means that some characters do feel quite similar (especially the *Fire Emblem* heroes), the sheer variety on offer remains impressive. Less impressive is the 3DS's analogue stick, which doesn't feel up to the task of handling the brutal pacing of Nintendo's brawler. As a result, the controls don't feel as precise as we'd like and it does take quite a while to get used to. It also feels a little too cramped and it becomes all too easy to lose track of your fighter. *Smash Bros* works best on a big screen and this feels like too much of a compromise.

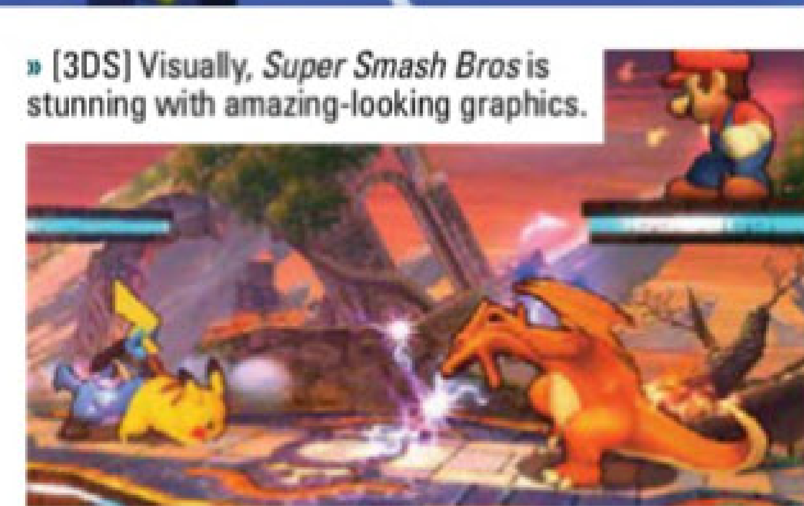

» [3DS] While we like many of the new stages, the auto-scrolling ones annoy.


» [3DS] Pac-Man and Mega Man are every bit as good as we expected.


» [3DS] While fun, *Smash Bros* on 3DS can be a claustrophobic experience.

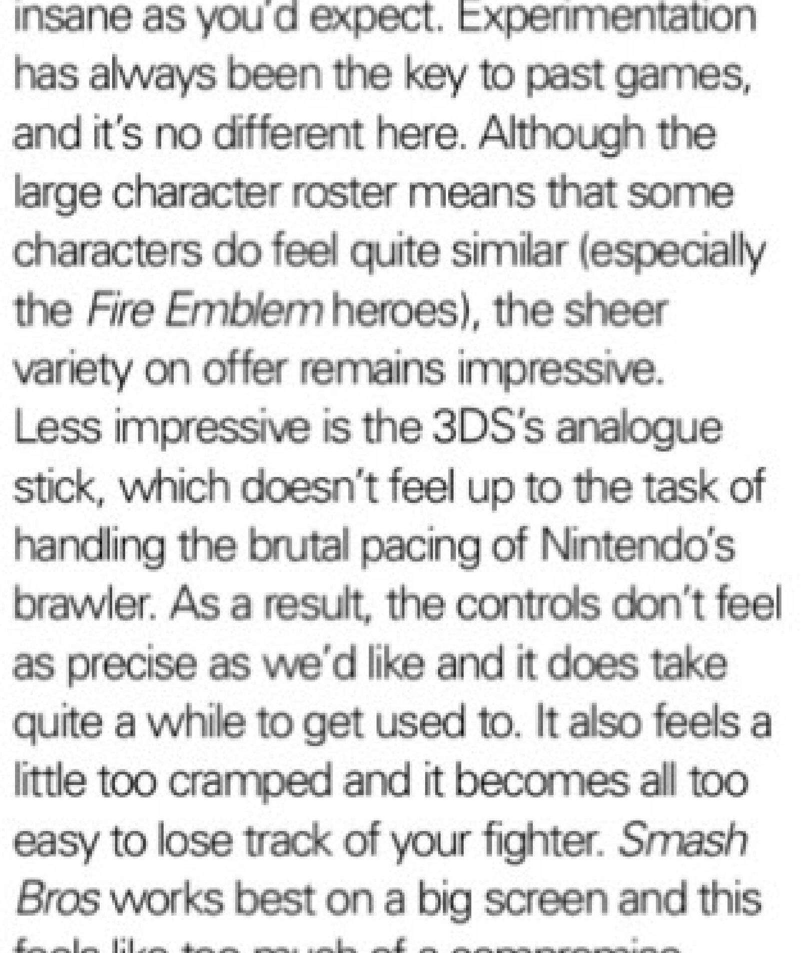
Another issue we have is the large amount of noticeable lag whenever you play multiplayer matches. While the online side of the game has been more stable since launch, local is still frustrating to play, killing a large part of *Smash Bros*' appeal and making us suspect that the Wii U version will be the one to plump for.

This is a shame, as there's so much to love in Nintendo's game. Characters like Pac-Man, Mega Man, Charizard and Wii Fit Trainer slot beautifully into the roster. Also, the new levels are as inventive and as lovingly created as ever – although the new scrolling stages can take a running jump – while new game modes like Smash Run prove good fun.


» [3DS] Visually, *Super Smash Bros* is stunning with amazing-looking graphics.

There's no denying that *Super Smash Bros* is a tremendous technical achievement, but it's one that comes with very noticeable compromises. Our advice? Wait for the incoming Wii U release, or upgrade to a 3DS XL.

78%



Pix The Cat

» System: PS Vita, PS4
» Buy it for: £9.99
» Buy it from: PSN

Pix The Cat proves it's still possible to look to the past and come up with interesting new gameplay ideas. As Pix, you travel around mazes collecting eggs that turn into cute ducks, which then follow you until you drop them off at certain points. Like *Snake*, you're not allowed to hit the procession of ducklings, so you'll need to plan your moves carefully to get through each stage as quickly as possible. Playing like a cross between *Flicky*, *Snake* and *Pac-Man: Championship Edition*, *Pix The Cat* has everything you want from a good high-score chaser. It's full of content as well, with three distinct gameplay modes (including a fun puzzle alternative) that will take quite a while to complete. Its only real downside is that the level patterns are quite easy to learn, so it lacks the high replay value of many of its peers.

75%

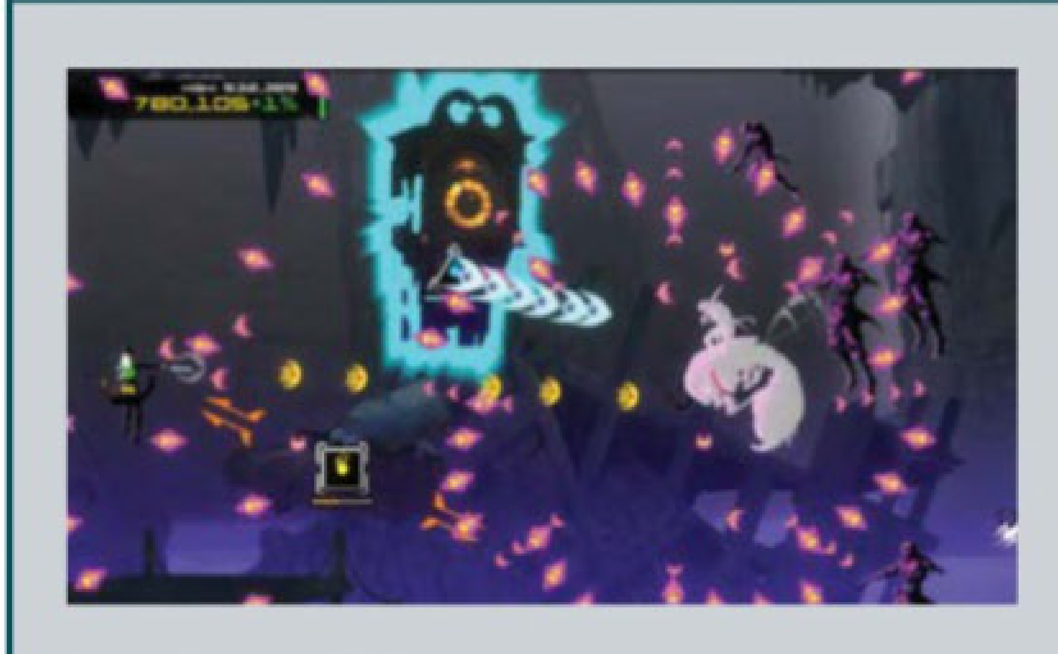


Boulder Dash 30th Anniversary

» System: iOS, Android
» Buy it for: Free (in-app purchases)
» Buy it from: App Store, Google Play

Now here's a pleasant surprise, a freemium game that doesn't actually try to gouge your cash from you. The gameplay is pure *Boulder Dash*, with a number of neat mechanics that range from sticks of dynamite to blow up rocks, to being able to freeze everything on screen for a short amount of time. A multiplier system helps you get high scores, there's a variety of different characters to unlock and it's possible to create additional gems by killing monsters. While you can pay to continue your current game, true veterans will simply restart the level. The time limits can be a little tight in places and the swipe controls aren't the best when the difficulty ramps up on later stages, but this remains an excellent game and a great way to celebrate such a landmark anniversary.

76%



A City Sleeps

» System: PC
» Buy it for: £10.99
» Buy it from: steampowered.com

It's a brave developer that steps out of its comfort zone to tackle a new genre. Sadly, for music devs Harmonix, the gamble hasn't really paid off. There is plenty to like about *A City Sleeps*. Aesthetically it's just what you'd expect from a Harmonix-created shoot-'em-up with expressive music and moody visuals. There's a strong gameplay mechanic too, with the ability to imbue certain objects with offensive or defensive ghosts at certain points of the game, adding a fair amount of strategy.

For all is aesthetic splendour, *A City Sleeps* falls down in its bullet patterns, which often feel a little too random and uninspired. It's also painfully short, with just three stages (and various difficulty settings). An interesting experiment and a shoo-in for the next Steam sale.

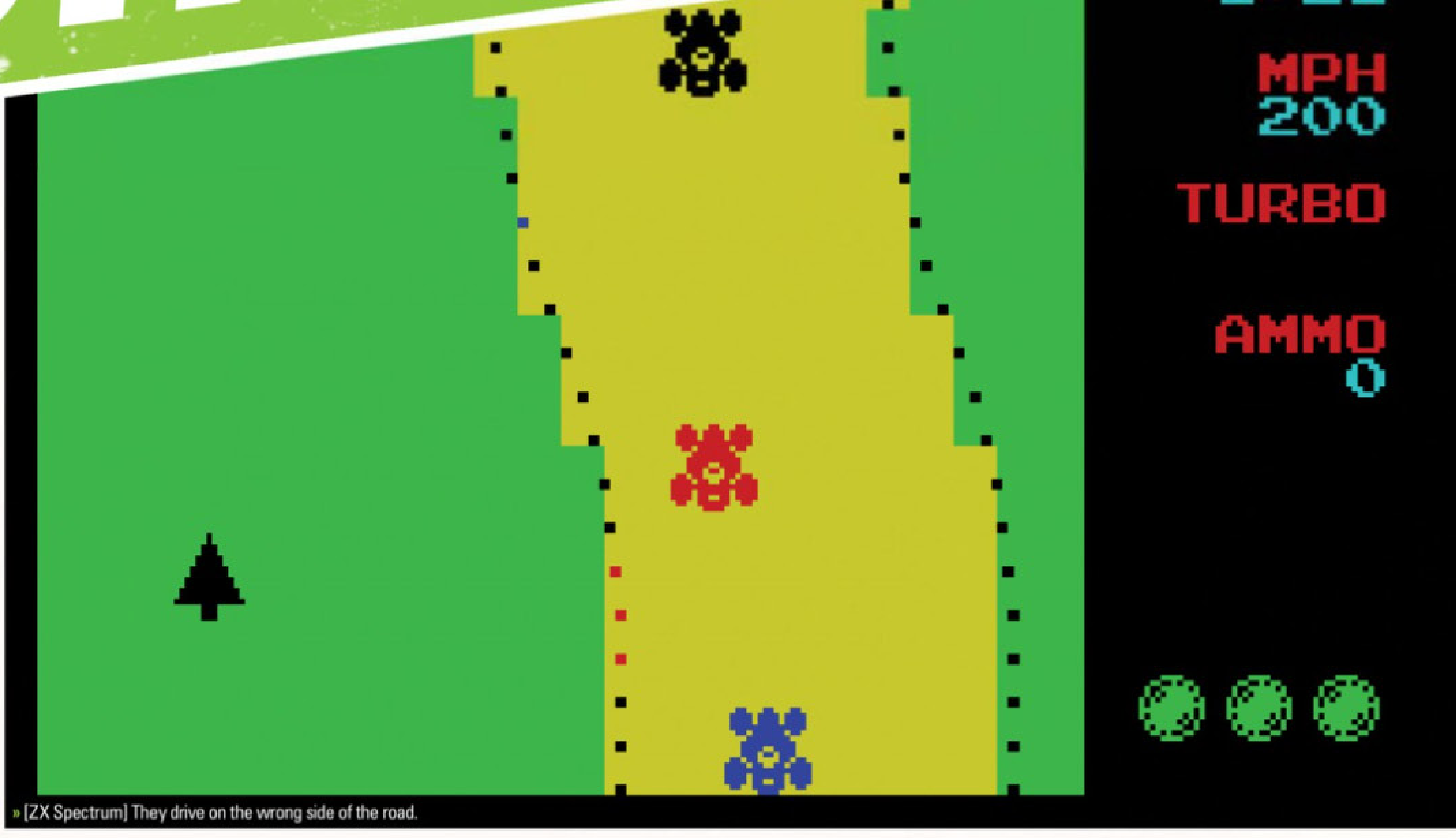
66%

Welcome to

Homebrew



>> One thing I've noticed while writing about indie games is that user feedback can be sparse; producing a game takes hard graft while the response is often minimal. So when you find a game you like, please consider a thank-you email or even sending a few quid. That encouragement could be what sets the author going on the next project



» [ZX Spectrum] They drive on the wrong side of the road.

SPECCY-FLAVOURED JAM

ZX games competition

The second Speccy Jam was a competition that started at the end of August and ran for a week, with the challenge being to produce a game that looked like it belonged on a ZX Spectrum, even to the point of simulating colour clash. There were over 20 releases in total, with a couple taking a few liberties with that simulation aspect, but they did manage to cover a range of different game styles. For example, *Space Conquest* is a turn-based game based on *Laser Quest* and *Space Crusade* where the player controls a squad of space marines during an exploratory mission, while *Avoid ZX* offers some fast-paced vertically scrolling action where the player guides a spacecraft around hazards and through some very tight gaps in the landscape. And of course there had to be some platformers in there, so we've got *Thingy's Quest For Stuff* with a noticeable *Jet Set Willy* vibe to it and *Fitbin* which has simpler graphical stylings and gameplay. Another minimal release is *Twin Ships*, which hands control of two craft to the player that rotate around a central point, with both needing to be positioned so they avoid barriers moving up the playfield.

But some of the entries weren't PC titles in colour-clashed clothing and there were games developed for the Spectrum too. Those releases include a multi-screen exploration game *Find The Greenroom*; some simple but challenging shooting action from *Mini Danmaku*; the amusing *First World Problems*, which is about the trek to the sorting office to collect a shiny new smartphone when it doesn't arrive on time; and Jonathan Cauldwell's *Retro Racer*, a top-down racing game inspired by the vertically scrolling coin-ops of the early 1980s. All of the entries can be downloaded from the Speccy Jam 2 forums behind Kikstart.eu/speccy-jam-2

> "To produce a game that looked like it belonged on a ZX Spectrum"

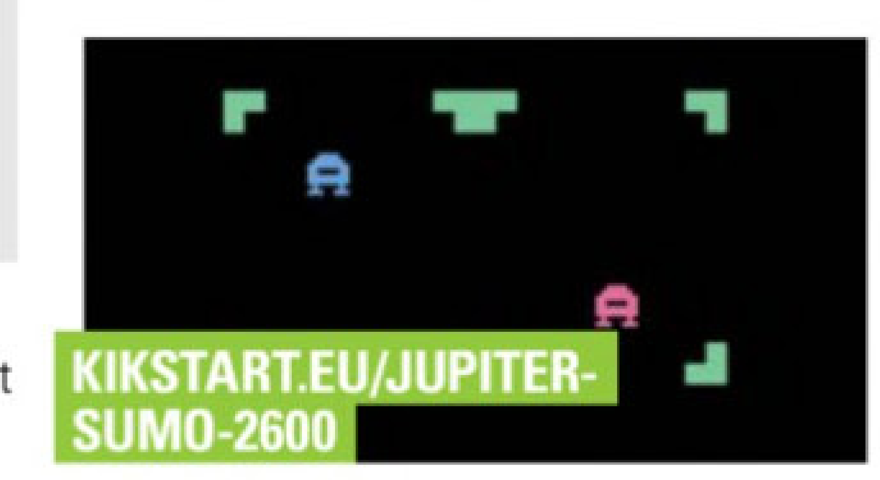
Incoming

If you want an insider tip, we'd argue that Speedmaza is worth keeping an eye on for Atari 8-bit

KIKSTART.EU/UNKATRIS-ZX81

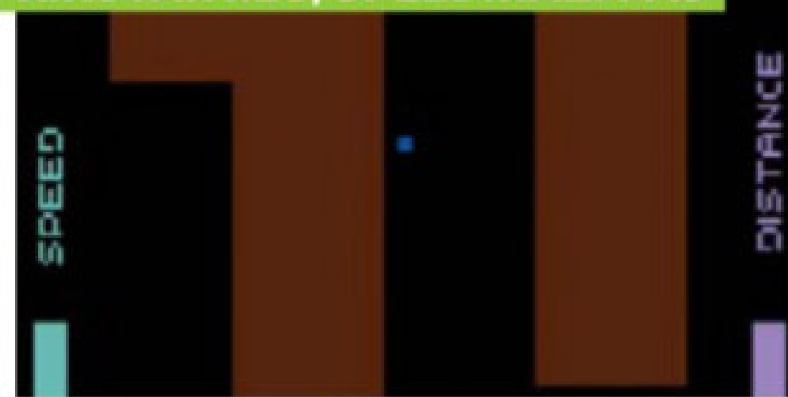
▲ Antonio Villena's *Unkatris* is a clone of *Tetris* crammed into the ZX81 without needing a RAM expansion.

▼ *Jupiter Sumo* for the Atari 2600 is a future-sport where spaceships push each other into walls.



KIKSTART.EU/JUPITER-SUMO-2600

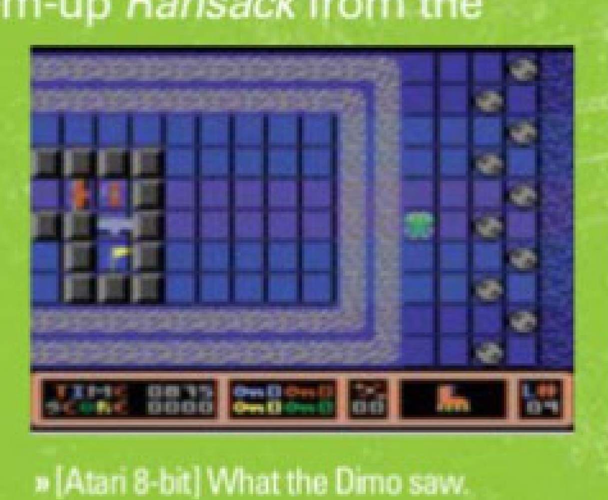
KIKSTART.EU/SPEEDMAZA-A8



▲ *Speedmaza* is a single-button maze navigation game for the Atari 8-bit; press fire or space at the corners.

THE FIRST POST

By the time this issue goes to print, most if not all of the ABBUC 2014 software competition entries should be available from their developers. This competition is always eagerly awaited by Atari 8-bit lovers and so far we've heard about six entries including a very colourful platformer called *RGB*, the puzzle game *Dimo's Quest* (previously mentioned) and a conversion of BBC Micro shoot-'em-up *Ransack* from the developers of last year's winner *X:8*. We'll cover all the entries in more depth soon, but what we've seen so far has been very promising.



» [Atari 8-bit] What the Dimo saw.



» [Amiga] 'Tis but a scratch.

HACK, SLASH AND PORT

Originally released on the Atari ST and now ported to the Amiga by Meynaf – who was previously responsible for the conversions of *International Karate* and *Oids* – Ubisoft's *Return To The Golden Age* is about a young man with a sword and the ability to influence the thoughts of others, who must take on the forces of evil to release the peoples of the Euroland from slavery. **Kikstart.eu/meynaf** goes to the developer's website and the download is near the bottom of the page. At the time of writing, the minimum specification is a 68020-based Amiga.

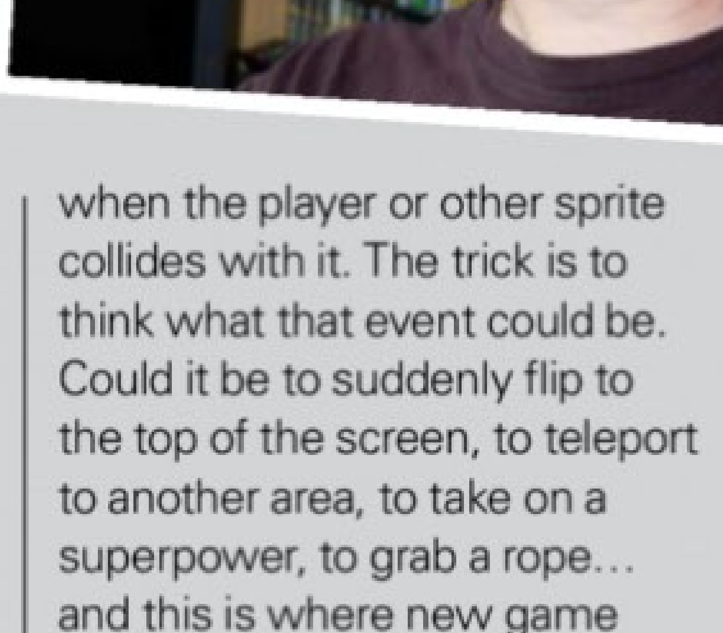
▼ Fans of *Dizzy* games may want to try Andrew Goulding's labour of love *Tycoon Dizzy* for Windows-powered PCs.



KIKSTART.EU/TYCOON-DIZZY-WIN

Homebrew heroes

Paul Jenkinson is, among other things, the man behind the recent Kyd Cadet 3 and other impressive ZX Spectrum games. So we borrowed him for a while to chat about creating his Arcade Game Designer-based titles



Hi Paul. How did you go about designing the *Kyd Cadet* games?
The first game came about almost by accident. I was trying to draw a recognisable sprite and no matter how I tried, I couldn't draw a good face. I stuck a helmet on there almost out of frustration and suddenly there was this spaceman. Obviously, there were a lot of games that featured spacemen – *Jetpac* is a good example – so I wanted something a little different, and that's when the idea of a boy came to mind, a space cadet.

From there it was a case of creating the world, and right from the start I knew I wanted to make a believable, joined-up game map, so scenery from one area would bleed into the next. Part of the fun for me is seeing how the environments change and how the player can find themselves in a strange new place without realising they have already travelled through the previous four! Until you actually look at the game map in full, you don't realise how it all fits together.

And what caused the change of style for the third instalment?
It was a comment on World Of Spectrum forums. Not about my games, luckily, but someone posted a quite innocent comment along the lines of "I'd like to see an AGD game that isn't platform based". I was also trying to come up with an idea for another game at the time and I knew I wanted to do some kind of shooting game. I wanted to do something that encompassed what I think I do well (platform games) but with new elements.

How long does a game like *Kyd Cadet* take to make?
If I had nothing else to do, and could concentrate on just making a game, I think I could have completed *Kyd Cadet 3* in about a month, maybe less. AGD is brilliant, you can create the thing in your mind and get it on screen very quickly. Typically though, life gets in the way, so games can take anything from three to six months.

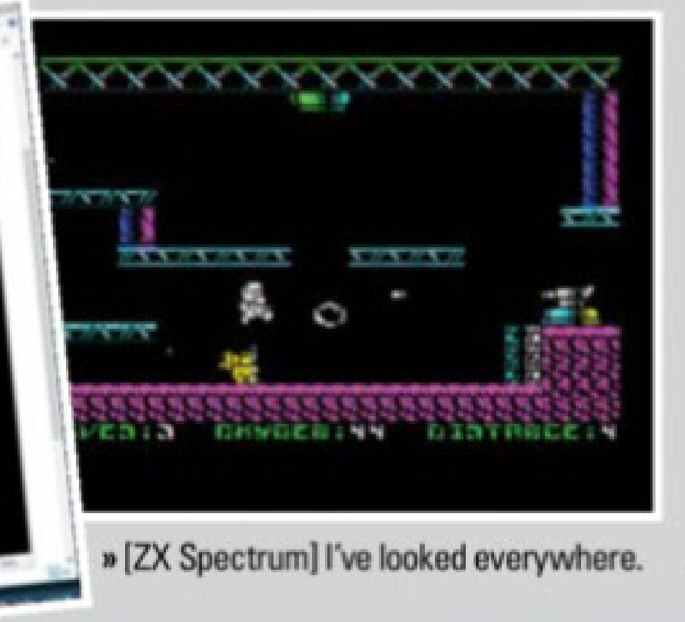
Does Arcade Game Designer shape the games made with it?
Good question. For people that are not prepared to put effort into their games the answer is definitely yes. It is so easy, with a few hours of work, to produce a below-average game that adheres to the basic rules and automatic parameters of AGD that anyone can create a game. My tutorial videos cover most of the basics anyone would need to make a *Manic Miner* clone in just four hours.

The challenge is to make AGD do what it wasn't meant to. For example, there is the Custom block, a simple 8x8 pixel block that with a few lines of code can trigger an event when the player or other sprite collides with it. The trick is to think what that event could be. Could it be to suddenly flip to the top of the screen, to teleport to another area, to take on a superpower, to grab a rope… and this is where new game ideas are born.

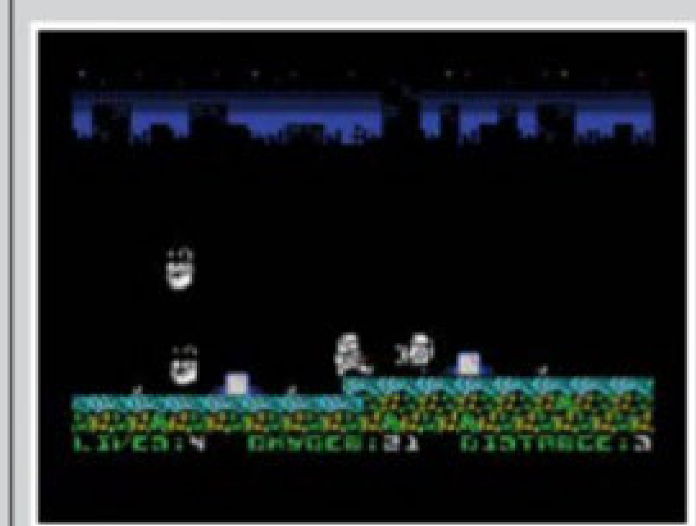
What feedback have you received from the Spectrum community?
The vast majority is very good, and thankfully only a few bugs. The games I make do not make money and are free to download, and they are done for my own enjoyment. I see it as a challenge, trying new things with AGD, and there are updates to the engine all the time. If other people like them, that's great.

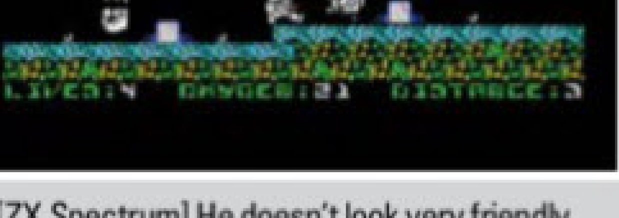
And finally, what can we expect to see from you in the future?
I have a new version of *Kyd Cadet 3*, a sort of version 1.1, nearly ready, with new screens and a little bug fix. Unluckily, time is precious at the moment, so I am struggling to fit it in. Apart from that, I am always working on new game ideas and, to be honest, I have no idea which of the ten or so games will make it past the test stage.

» [ZX Spectrum] Assembling the pieces.



» [ZX Spectrum] I've looked everywhere.





» [ZX Spectrum] He doesn't look very friendly.

X=Y=Z

» **FORMAT:** SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM
» **DEVELOPER:** BOB SMITH
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/XYZ-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

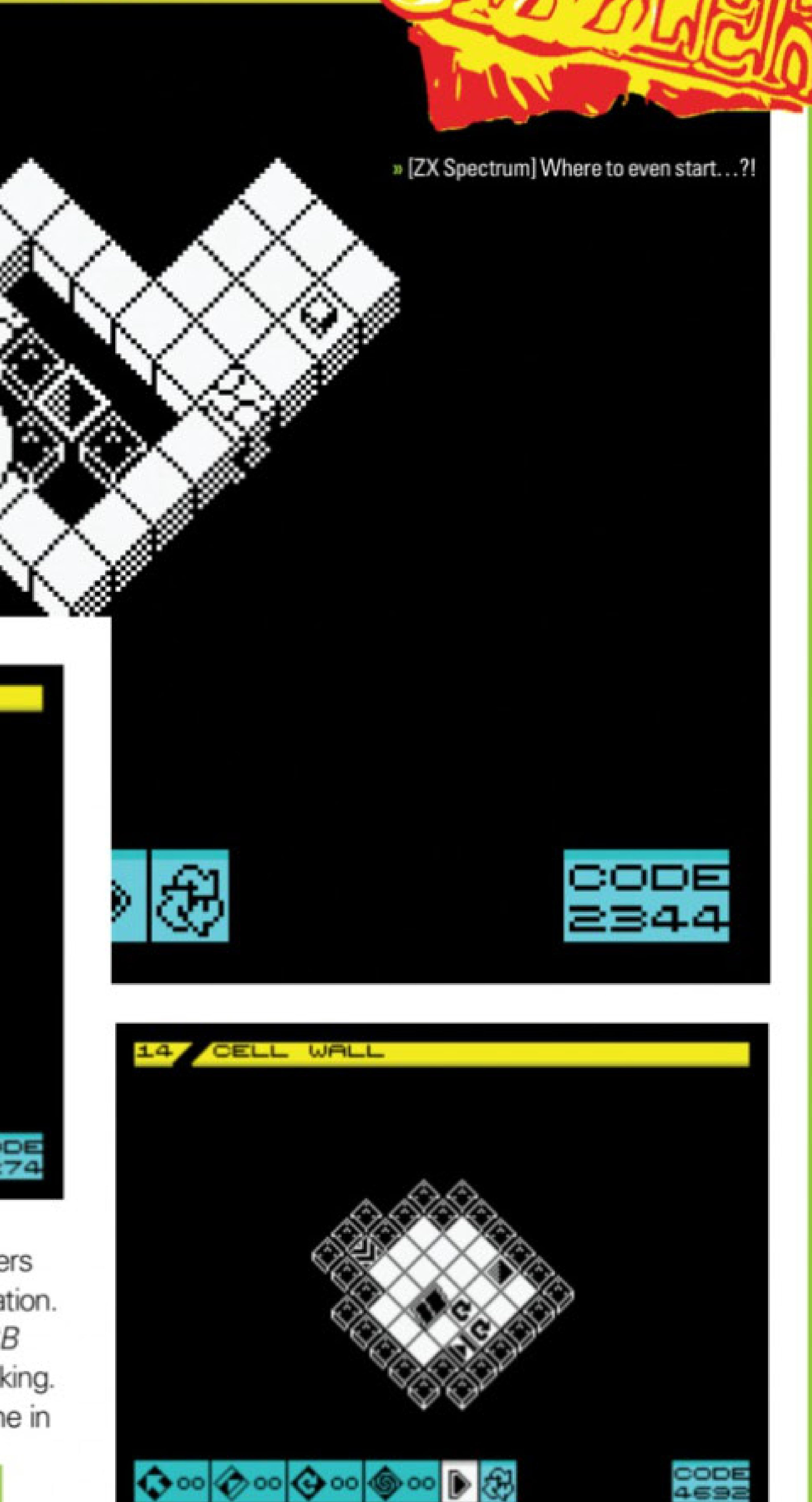
retro GAMER SIZZLER

Back in issue 65 we looked at *W*H*B*, an isometric 3D puzzler for the Spectrum by Bob Smith where the objective was to 'roll' a rectangular box across the playfield to finish with it standing on end over the exit. *X=Y=Z* is described as the spiritual successor of that game, and at first glance it might appear to be simpler since the block is now a cube so marching it straight into the exit should be child's play, right? Well no, because the player doesn't directly control the cube's motion this time around.

Instead it gets pushed off in an initial direction from the starting point and keeps 'walking' until something nasty happens to it. Before setting things moving, the player can place control tiles on some of the playfield which will influence the cube's passage, doing things like rotating it 90 degrees, sliding it around without altering the current direction of travel, forcing the movement to change to a specific direction or teleporting it. The levels themselves have a few tricks as well, including pathways that are only ethereal until a switch elsewhere on the stage is pressed and crumbing blocks that disintegrate after being crossed. So using the strictly limited quota of tools on each stage to find the correct route to safety will take some lateral thinking and a bit of trial and error.

As with *W*H*B*, the 34 stages here are a team effort, with contributions from Einar Saukas, Matt Lambert, Dave Hughes and Bob Smith himself. There are no time limits or lives to worry about and a four-digit code is given out for each stage, so players can give each puzzle lots of head-scratching deliberation. *X=Y=Z* might be a different style of game to *W*H*B* but is just as playable and even more thought-provoking. Players shouldn't expect to complete the entire game in one sitting, but keeping a note of the level codes as they're handed out means it can be returned to repeatedly.

91%



» [ZX Spectrum] Where to even start…?!



» [ZX Spectrum] Convoluted solutions.

14 CELL WALL
CODE 4692

» [ZX Spectrum] Note the four-digit code, to return to it later.

Make this

Every month our very own Jason Kelk will be teaching you handy new programming techniques. This month: storing backgrounds

NEW

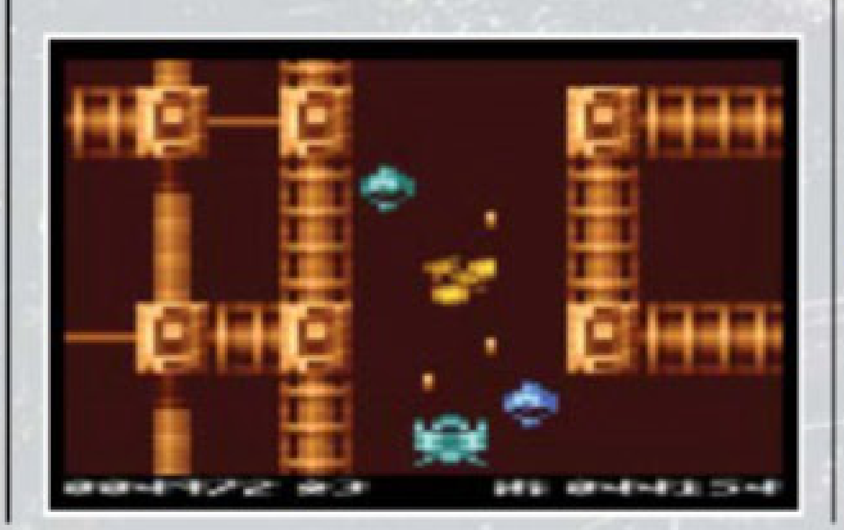
1 One problem with 8-bit computers is cramming level data into limited memory. The simplest approach, as used by *Red Max* on the Atari 8-bit among others, is to store a byte for each character, but that can take up a significant chunk of memory for each level.





2 Depending on the game and what is needed, the data can be compressed. *RG Rampage* on the C64 only needs a couple of bytes for each platform that say where it starts on screen, how wide it is and which platform type to draw.

3 In addition, many games use 'tiles'. In the case of *Battle Eagle* for the Atari 8-bit, the levels are built from 4x4 character blocks. However, other examples use 8x8, 2x2 or even one character by 20. It all depends on the requirements of the game.



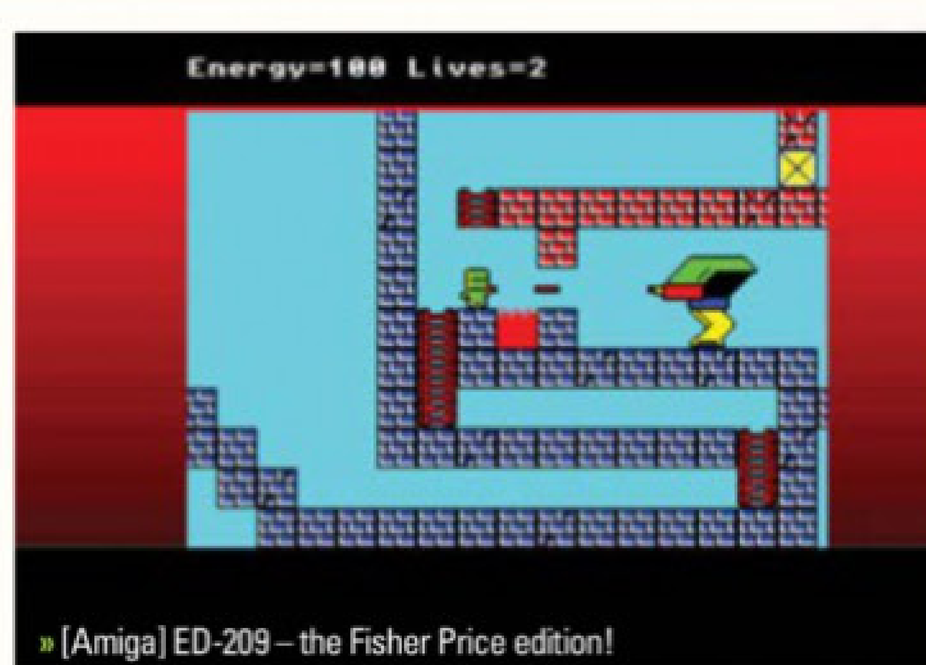


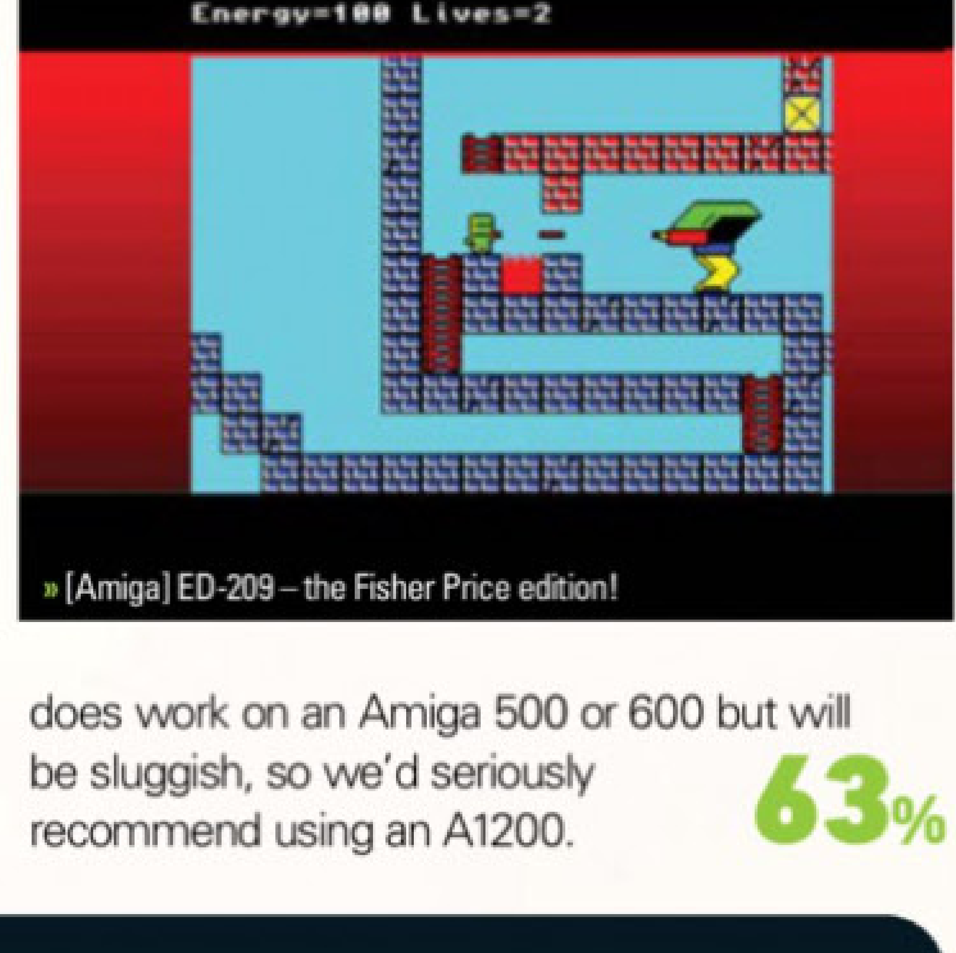
4 *The Last Ninja* series takes things even further, with each screen being stored as a series of features like trees or rocks and info on where to draw them into the bitmap – we can slow the C64 version down with an emulator to see how it works.

BOXX

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE AMIGA » **DEVELOPER:** LEMMING880
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/BOX-AMIGA » **PRICE:** FREE

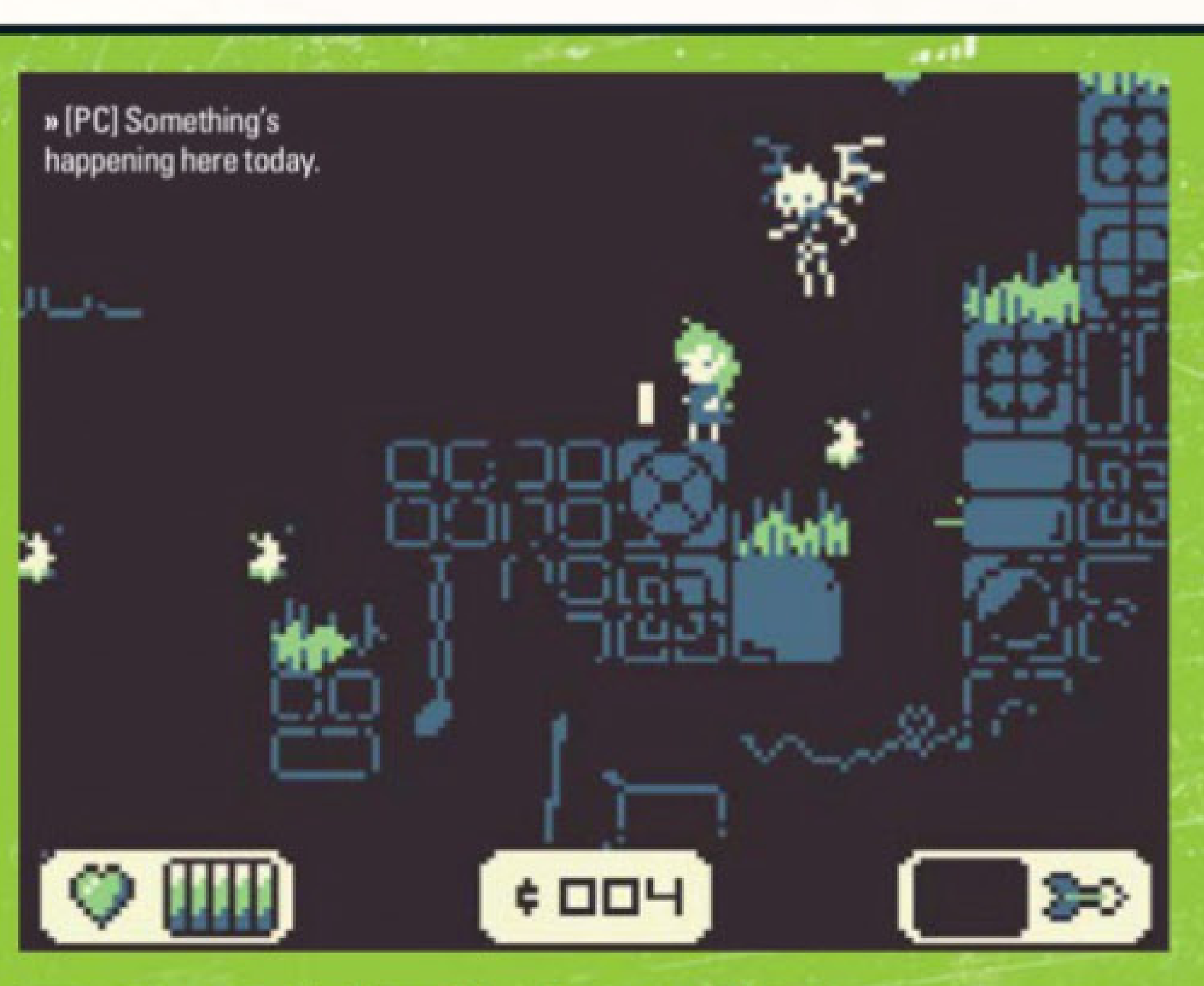
The developer of *Boxx* calls it a five-minute platform game. It reminded us just a little of fellow Amiga platform puzzler *Sqrzx* but without the sadistic level of difficulty. The objective is to find and collect every coin on the stage; some in the open, while others are held by stomp-able monsters. There are also blocks that magically appear or disappear as the player moves around, and teleporters to other coin-laden areas. The game being deliberately short means reasonably skilled players should romp through to the boss pretty quickly. Although we'd have liked more content, *Boxx* still offers some fun and developer Lemming880 will hopefully go on to produce something more substantial in the future. *Boxx* does work on an Amiga 500 or 600 but will be sluggish, so we'd seriously recommend using an A1200.





» [Amiga] ED-209 – the Fisher Price edition!

63%



» [PC] Something's happening here today.

ROGUELIGHT

» **FORMAT:** PC » **DEVELOPER:** DANIEL LINSSEN
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ROGUELIGHT-WIN » **PRICE:** FREE

***Roguelight* is a** cave-based platform exploration game, one where light is the most important factor. When the game first starts, the player's character only has two sources of light – either emitted by flaming torches attached to some of the walls or from the temporarily luminescent arrows used by her bow. Things are improved by shooting hanging lanterns to light them, but running out of ammo and blundering around helplessly in the dark will be a common occurrence early on.

The objective is to pick up coins from the ground and by shooting lanterns or enemies. These can then be spent in the shop to purchase one of the 36 upgrades to the archer's stamina, bow, arrows and coin-finding abilities which will make each subsequent attempt more successful. The shop appears after every death and the purchases are persistent, so buying something that increases stamina will survive even restarting the game.

82%

ARCHEOMANIA

» **FORMAT:** SINCLAIR ZX SPECTRUM » **DEVELOPER:** RAFAK MIAZGA
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/ARCHEO-SPEC » **PRICE:** FREE

Ancient temples are dangerous places, especially for one particular archaeologist who has literally fallen into a trap. She finds herself in a pit which is slowly filling with the stone blocks tumbling in from above and, as she clambers onto the fallen masonry, it pushes her ever closer to the deadly spikes that are also inexorably creeping downwards.

Our nameless heroine can't be controlled directly and will wander back and forth in search of an exit, so she must be helped by removing the blocks and clearing a path to the ground. This is achieved by forming rows across the pit, just like *Tetris* in fact!

Archeomania is a neat puzzler based on *Tetris Plus* which offers some challenging gameplay. The only downside we found was that the controls feel somewhat twitchy, so getting a block rotated correctly or into the right position can sometimes prove frustrating.

71%



» [ZX Spectrum] One Tetris coming up.



» [ZX Spectrum] Waiting for a long piece.

INVENIES VERBA

» **FORMAT:** ATARI 8-BIT » **DEVELOPER:** BILL KENDRICK
» **DOWNLOAD:** KIKSTART.EU/VERBA-A8 » **PRICE:** FREE

***Invenies Verba* – Latin** for 'find the words' – is like a rapid-fire cross between popular teatime quiz show *Countdown* and the classic board game *Scrabble*. The player is presented with a cluster of randomly selected letters and must make valid words from them before the time runs out. Scoring is based on the letters used, with the less common ones giving more points.

» [Atari 8-bit] 'Game' is the best word.

The game doesn't have an overall time limit – instead, each letter has a limited lifespan represented by a slowly expanding bar next to it; if one is left unused for too long, it expires and ends the game. That does make *Invenies Verba* a fast-paced and challenging game, but it does at least come with a reasonably sized word list – as well as a German dictionary option – so while playing, we've only bumped into a couple of words that it didn't know.

77%

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a copy of our latest eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 3**, a bargain if ever there was one



» Sorry, Back To The Eighties fans – we ran out of Eighties to cover!

BACK TO BACK TO THE EIGHTIES?

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I am a big fan but what happened to the Back To The Eighties section in issue 133? I buy the magazine because of this excellent section. Please bring it back – to me, retro is the Eighties. Thanks.
Nick Moudios

You're not the only reader who feels that way, Nick – a fair few people have enquired as to the whereabouts of Back To The Eighties. Unfortunately, since the section was introduced in issue 13, Richard Burton has covered all 120 months of the Eighties, from January 1980 to December 1989. It's been a long run, with coverage starting all the way back in February 2005, but there's no way that the Back To The Eighties section could have continued without repeating itself.

A NICE CUP OF COCO

Hello!
I just wanted to thank you for the mind-jog answer you gave me in **Retro Gamer** 132. You called it right with *OIDS* for the Macintosh Classic II! After I read the answer, I quickly texted my friend, of whom I had written about in my question. He and I had a moment of pure nostalgic bliss remembering all of our time together playing the game. It was fantastic to relive and finally remember what game had occupied so many hours of our youth.

Also, if that wasn't enough, thank you as well for the TRS-80 Minority Report in the same issue. I had a TRS-80 Color Computer III growing up. While I never had any games for the TRS-80, aside from my type-ins from several magazines I'd been given, I always wondered if there were any good games available for it. My family had gotten the computer second-hand from friends and, as a youngster, I never had the cash for magazines to research or to actually buy games. Minority Report opened my eyes to some of the sparkling little gems the system had available for it and is tempting me to talk my dad into finding it in his attic. If he finds it, I'm thinking of tracking down *A Mazing World Of Malcom Mortar* and a few others printed on your pages.

Quite the great games magazine, my friends! While I know it wasn't dedicated to me, the memories you've helped me relive made me feel like it was my magazine, just for me!
Tony Jelinek



» [TRS-80] Tony Jelinek is looking to pick up some TRS-80 games following our Minority Report.

It's great to hear that we were able to help out!

ATHAZAGORAPHOBIA

Dear **Retro Gamer,**
I am fairly certain that the description by Jim MacLeod of a mystery side-scrolling shooter in issue 134's Mailbag contains at least some elements taken from *Phobia* on the Atari ST.

It isn't an arcade game and it doesn't have mountains in the background, so perhaps there has been a mix-up there.

But the spiders spinning web lines across the screen, which the player's spaceship must shoot through, are unmistakable.

Phobia was also a contender for hardest game of all time.
Will Bateman

Thanks Will. Mixed-up memories certainly do happen, so you might not be far off. Does anyone else think they have the answer?



» [Atari ST] It's got the destructible spider webs, but is *Phobia* the game Jim MacLeod was looking for?

STAR LETTER

THAT WAS COOL

Hi **RG,**
I just wanted to say thank you for last month's Sega Saturn issue. I've been reading your magazine every month for around five years now and in my opinion that was the greatest issue you've produced in that time frame. Not only did it cover one of my favourite consoles ever, but the piece on collectors and their collections was fantastic.

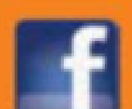
As a ten-year-old child in 1997 getting my hands on the Sega Saturn quite late, I spent many a day arguing the toss at school about how it was way better than the PlayStation. It had *Sega Rally*, *Virtua Fighter 2*, *NiGHTS*, *Panzer Dragoon*, *Virtua Cop*, *Dead Or Alive* and one of my personal favourites, *Clockwork Knight* to name a few. What did the PSX have? Pish. That's what. The article brought back many fond memories as a kid and convinced me to go to eBay and buy one. Boxed of course…

I've loved collecting games since my primary school days and only in my twenties have I truly appreciated the value of a complete boxed-with-instructions Mega Drive game. It's a shame that collecting has gotten more difficult with the days of eBay and such, and having a real job and bills doesn't help either. One of the most upsetting things, though, is people who know nothing about videogames bumping the prices up because they think stuff is rarer than it sometimes is.

So yeah, thanks **RG**. That was a splendid read.
Dean Puckering

Any time someone decides to pick up a game or console after reading something in Retro Gamer, we're extremely happy – that's the kind of enthusiasm we want to create. Hopefully, one day sellers at large will realise that retro games aren't universally valuable!

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates

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Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

"I had absolutely no idea there were two spin-off games"

ETERNALLY GRATEFUL

Dear **RG**,

Oh my goodness! You've enlightened me yet again; this time in your *Punch-Out!!* 'Rank Outsiders' boxout. I'm a big *Eternal Champions* fan but I had absolutely no idea there were two spin-off games. It inspired me to do a bit of online research. Turns out there was also a third mainline *Eternal Champions* game planned, but Sega of Japan bullied Sega of America into not pursuing it as they felt it might harm the prospects of *Virtua Fighter* stateside.

Cathartically, I also went on to YouTube and watched a half-hour video of every single overkill and fatality from the games, which had added interest since I never owned the Mega-CD follow-up. Brilliant.

But what was most heartening was seeing that the Wikipedia entry for the 20-year-old (and fairly unloved) first game had been updated within the last fortnight. It just goes to show that every game has its fans, and every game has stories worth telling, both known and undiscovered.

Keep up the good work.

Tim Fitches

PS I'd love to see a proper feature soon – any chance you could add it to your list?



» [Mega Drive] Sega had big plans for its flagship 2D fighting series, but two spin-offs were all that emerged.

You might also be interested to know that an *Eternal Champions* comic strip ran in *Sonic The Comic*, with contributors including former *Judge Dredd* artist Jon Haward. As for a feature on the series, it's something we'll look at doing in the future as there's an interesting story to tell there.



DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Mega Drive Madness

Darran's been on a Mega Drive buying spree, picking up the likes of *Contra: Hard Corps*, *Castlevania: Bloodlines* and *Dick Tracy*. He's even been parading his purchases in front of our colleagues on Play, X-ONE and games™, telling them that he always gets the best games in the office. It's hard to disagree…



From the forum

» www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, Retro Gamer asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know…

Your favourite TurboGrafx-16 game

The Laird
It's a very hard choice indeed, the TurboGrafx has such a superb library, but I going to go with *Blazing Lazers* – my favourite vertically scrolling shooter on any system.

ncf1
Drunken Master, if only for the flying side kick sprite which is the best sprite of all time, apart from Rastan himself perhaps. Actually though, the game is rubbish, so I will settle for *Salamander*. A bit too fast but otherwise top-notch.

kiwimike
R-Type would still be king for me. *Street Fighter* also just shows how superb this console is.

gman72
It has to be *Bloody Wolf* for me. Quality run-and-gun action.

Hiro
R-Type for me. Not a PC Engine original game, but a fantastic conversion that showed what the small plastic box from NEC could do.

ArchaicKoala
My favourite is *Devil Crash*. It may only have one main table, but the additional 'boss' tables, horror visuals, physics and music just make this a standout title for me.

felgekarp
If it's the TurboGrafx-16 then it's *Ordyne*; if it's the PC Engine then it's *Mr Heli*.

RodimusPrime
Out of the games I have played, *Ninja Warriors* is the one for me.

Charco
I would have to go for *Street Fighter II Champion Edition*. How they managed to fit everything on that HuCard I will never know. My favourite home version of the game.

themightymartin
It has to be *Bomberman '94*. The best version of the best game in one of the best franchises of all-time!

quantum
R-Type was jaw-dropping. I remember my C64-owning mates thinking I had an arcade cab in my house!

the_hawk
I'm a big fan of late '80s and early '90s arcade conversions, especially shoot-'em-ups, and the PC Engine had a lovely selection. My favourite would probably be *Parodius Da!*.

Mancman
Never played on one, however I remember *Drunken Master* and being totally amazed at the size of the sprites and the detail in the graphics.



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From Bedrooms To Billions

After several years, Anthony and Nicola Caulfield's tribute to the birth of the British games industry is finished. We caught up with Anthony to find out how it all went



So how does it feel to know your project is finally finished?
It is hard to believe. It has been such a long road, but to see it at our recent EGX premiere the other night was a great feeling!

Why has it taken so long and what roadblocks did you face?
We wanted to tell a thorough, entertaining story that covers more than 30 years. There are elements of that story that no one actually knows the answers to, such as the UK publisher decline of the mid-1990s. Therefore it meant filming a lot of interviews (well over a hundred in fact [and] most of them filmed on separate days) to really get to the bottom of it. In addition, the film is full of archive footage, photos and other elements that really help back up a story that starts in the late 1970s, and all of these had to be researched and then sourced.

What was it like to have so many classic developers together in one place for the premiere?
As a fan myself, it was an incredible feeling, especially as so many of them were able to come along for such a special night!

Was there anyone who was able to evade you, or did you get everyone you wanted?
I don't want to spoil the film; there are so many interviewees who pop up throughout, you always feel like someone new is guiding you through. However, some people are not comfortable in front of camera but they did help us in other ways.

Why do you think documentaries like *From Bedrooms to Billions* are so important?
They are important because they recognize and record a piece of history. This is why the film has no voiceover or anyone saying 'this is what it must have been like for them', because you are only hearing from those that lived and experienced it themselves, so it's more like 'this is what it was like for me'.

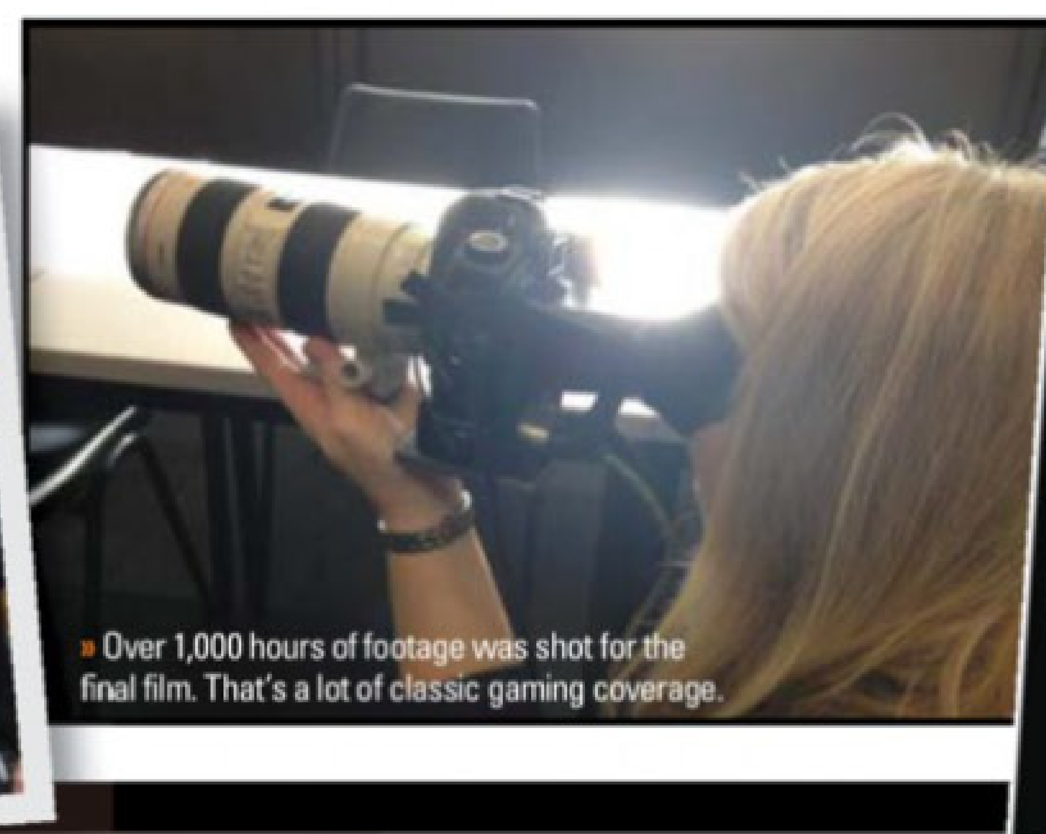
A snippet of the Oliver twins, hopefully revealing a new Dizzy game.

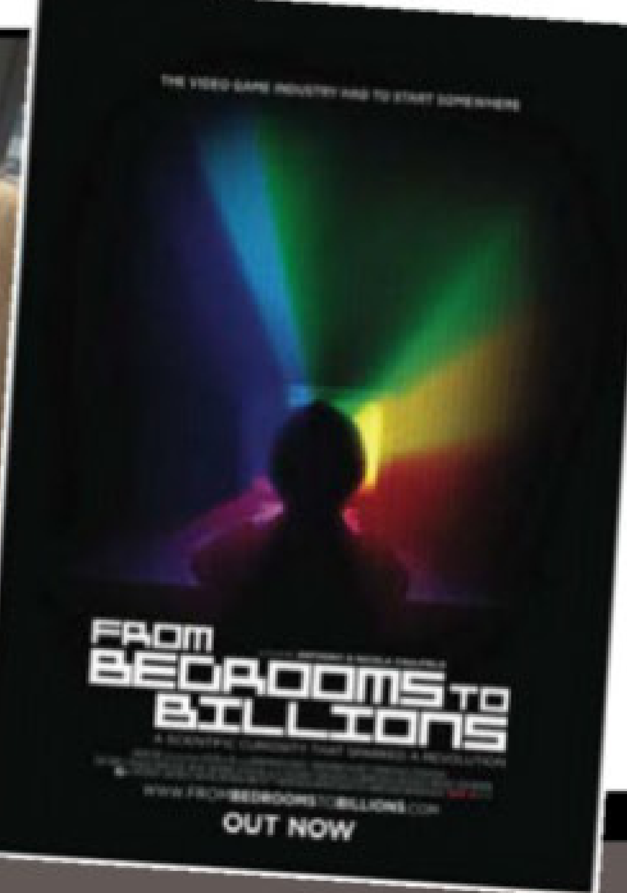
How will you ensure *From Bedrooms to Billions* reaches the largest possible audience?
The hardest work comes when the film is released on 3 October from our website at www.frombedroomstobillions.com along with nearly three hours of extra material, because then we have to shout about it all from the rooftops. Plus we have a small European cinema tour where guests from the film will appear with us, so keep checking our website for updates.

Who was the best person you got to interview and why?
Sounds like a cop-out answer but there was not a single interview shot that wasn't fantastic at the time; they were all unique and incredibly personal. This is why we got the type of interviews we got: real and not corporate. Therefore Nicola and I love them all!

Do you have any plans for a future retro documentary. If not, why not?
The 2.5-hour film breaks the ice on all that and tells the story. However, we have over 1,000 extra hours of footage, so this is why there is another 2.5 hours available in the Special Edition, also available from www.frombedroomstobillions.com. Therefore if people like the way it has all been done and want to see more then we'll keep editing material up and release even more!


Anthony posing with his wife and industry legend, Peter Molyneux.


Over 1,000 hours of footage was shot for the final film. That's a lot of classic gaming coverage.



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ELITE CELEBRATED

AS **ELITE DANGEROUS** PREPARES TO DOCK, **DAVID BRABEN** REVISITS EVERY GAME IN THE SERIES AND REVEALS WHY HIS LATEST GAME WILL BE WORTH THE **30-YEAR** WAIT

Microvision

■ As Milton Bradley's innovative handheld turns 35, Marty Goldberg takes a retrospective look back at its impact on the industry

Ranarama

■ Hewson's Ranarama was a quirky take on Atari's Gauntlet. Graftgold's Steve Turner explains how it all happened

Puzzle Bobble

■ Our latest Ultimate Guide looks at Bub and Bob, who stopped blowing bubbles so they could star in an awesome puzzle game

Master System

■ There was so much more to Sega's console than just fancy arcade ports. To prove it, readers have voted for their personal favourites

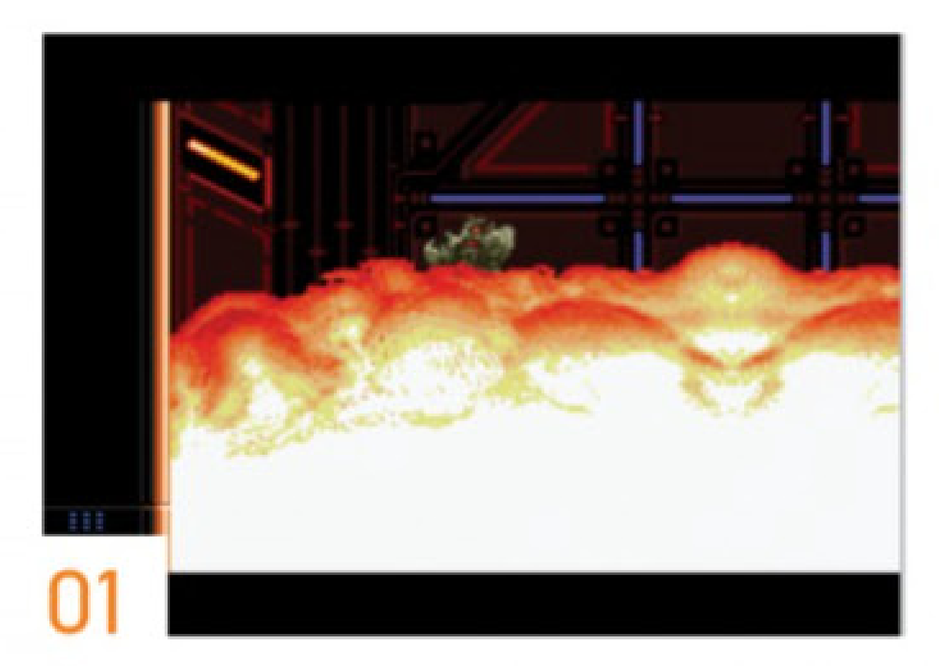
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ENDGAME



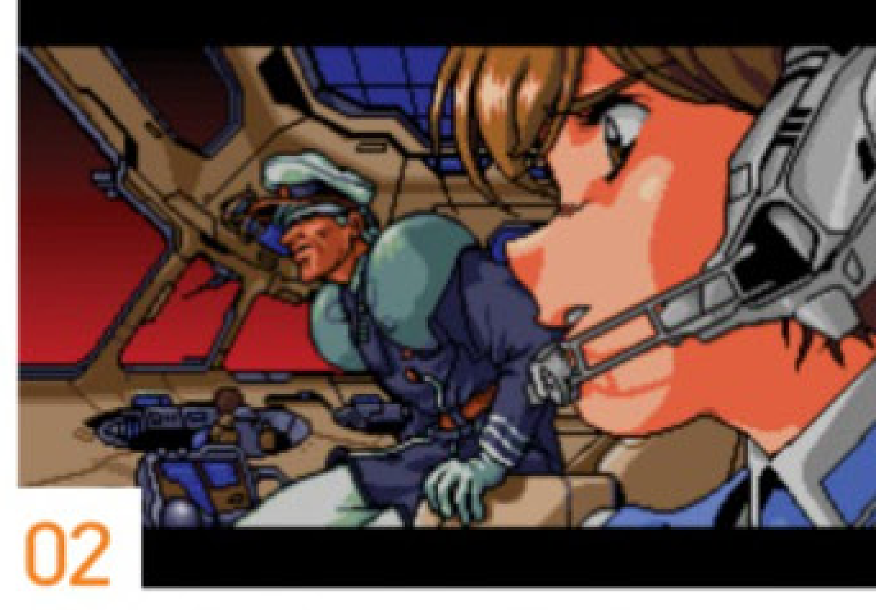
CYBERNATOR

» For some reason Konami's SNES shooter never gets enough love. Maybe it was released too late in the console's life, or perhaps people didn't like the idea of controlling a clunky mech (it isn't, but it's a fair assumption to make). Regardless, it's a great game with a typically bombastic ending that's everything you'd expect from the Japanese developer.



01

» After taking down a three-screen-tall metal boss, you find yourself desperately trying to escape its base before the whole thing blows up and takes you with it. It's like the Death Star scene from *Return Of The Jedi* but decidedly less awesome.



02

» As the flames rise round the seemingly stricken Assault Suit, Jake's squeeze Claire looks anxiously on, hoping against hope that the Pacific States' Marine Corp insurance will cover what's no doubt going to be a very expensive repaint.



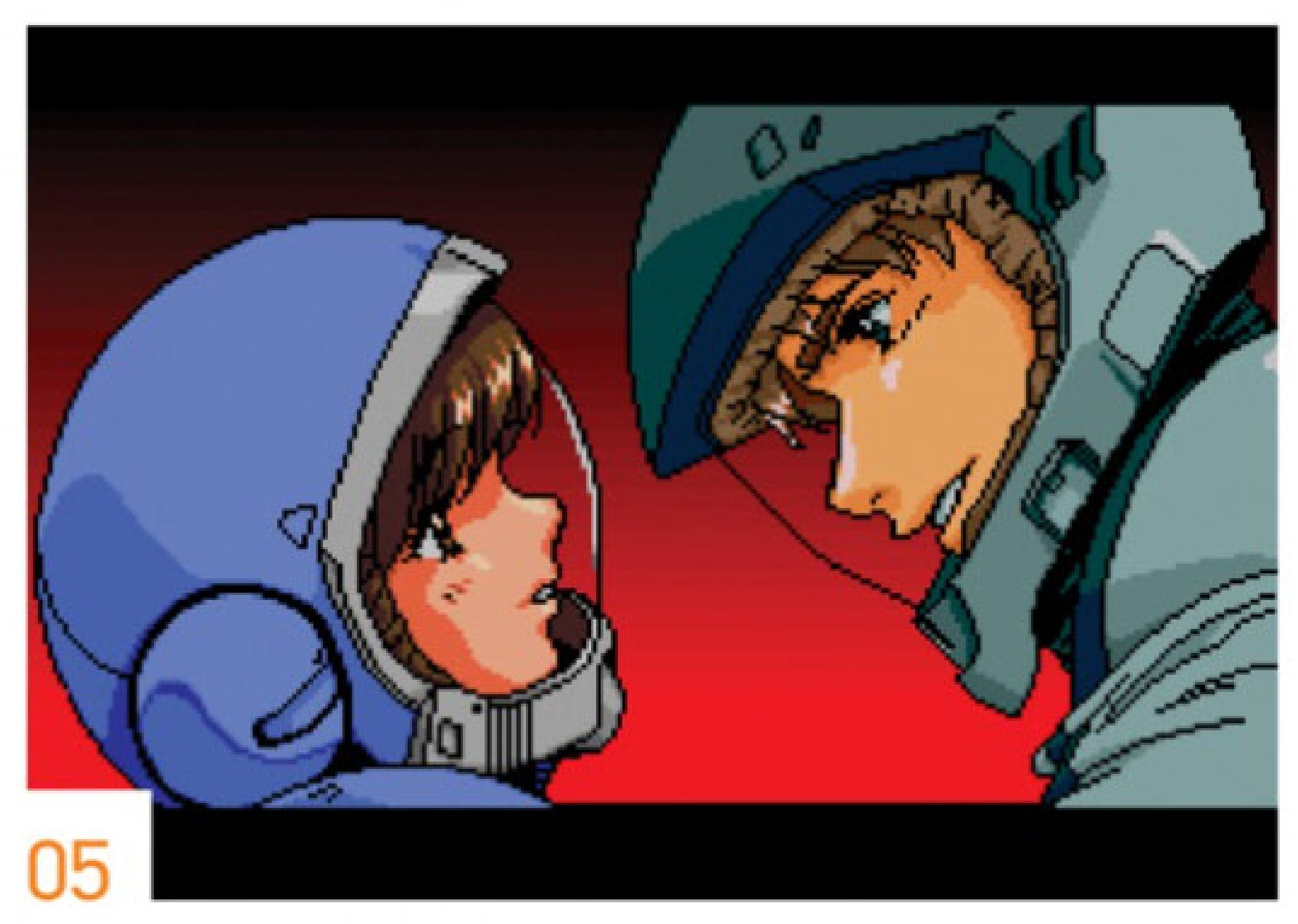
03

» Just when all hope seems lost, Jake and his ride emerge from the inferno and prepare to head earthwards. Battered but certainly not beaten, the music swells triumphantly as Jake parks his gigantic mech on the ruined surface.



04

» The Assault Suit lands and Jake emerges, no doubt pleased to be once again on terra firma. He's barely out when the Assault Suit collapses to the ground, ruined beyond repair. Jake's not alone, though, as a daintier figure appears across the way and begins to run towards him. It's Claire, clearly pleased to see him.



05

» As his wrecked Cybernator blows up behind him, Jake embraces his sweetheart, relieved that his long battle is over. As they hug, we learn that while the world is ruined, the future is full of promise and everyone can live in peace. Except for Jake, who gets charged for wrecking Earth's last line of defence.

